

Alliance as to the nature of the threat posed by the adversary and, consequently, the best means of countering it. David C. Hendrickson has written an elegant and sensible study, *The Future of American Strategy*, directed primarily to the first of these problems. He deals with the three main areas of American strategic concern: the defence of Western Europe, Western access to the oil of the Gulf, and the maintenance of strategic nuclear stability. On all of these he has wise things to say, and he says them in language which is not only intelligible to the layman, but a pleasure to read. Like Luttwak, he sees no solutions to the problem of Western European defence other than those already adopted. No alternative conventional defence can ultimately replace nuclear deterrence, for the reason given by Luttwak: militarily credible strategies for the defence of Europe are politically unacceptable, and even if they were politically and economically feasible, they would only erode deterrence. Nevertheless, a substantial conventional element – and specifically a substantial American conventional element – is politically necessary to ensure stability.

The threat to Gulf oil Hendrickson cuts down to size. If the United States is seriously concerned about it, he argues, it should take broad measures to reduce its dependence. In any case, Soviet intervention, highly improbable and strategically very difficult, could best be countered by help to regional forces, and if necessary by air power. In general, indeed, Hendrickson considers that "the use of ground forces is inconsistent with our basic interests and is not necessary in order to safeguard our position in the Third World"; the "Nixon doctrine", in short, was right, and we should return to it.

As for nuclear strategy, Hendrickson revives the useful distinction first made by Hans Delbrück, between a strategy of annihilation and one of attrition; the one aiming at disarming the enemy, and the other at exhausting him, or weakening his will to resist. Applied to nuclear strategy, both would involve "war-fighting" – that is, the targeting of military objectives. But whereas the first demands an inevitably destabilizing first-strike capability against "hard targets", the second relies on assured retaliation against targets which, though "soft", still have military utility. To call this "attrition" is stretching the term unjustifiably, but the distinction between attacking the enemy's capacity to resist and his will to do so is entirely legitimate. David Hendrickson is more effective in analysing the defects of such a strategy than in spelling out his own recommendations, but he has got hold of the right end of the stick.

Fragment of a poem written by Rudyard Kipling in his madness

"God has arranged that a clean-run youth of the British middle classes shall, in the matter of backbone, brains and bowels, surpass all other youths."

Oh, I hate the Jews and Poles
and their ladies (and their holes)
and the perilous polite Chinese!
But the sight that makes me glad
is a clean-run English lad –
that's the lad I love in each degree!

For in corners that are tight
he's the one to see you right –
they would fox the Portuguese –
he is far above all filth
and a yeoman of the tithe
and he's manly, much like you and me!

He was bullied hard at school
and in some ways he's a fool
but to be stillness he never would agree –
he's a White Man to the core,
from Cnerphilly to Cawnpore
he's the straightest thing you'll ever see!

GAVIN EWART

The Politics of Alternative Defence: A policy for a non-nuclear Britain also charts a "grand strategy", not only for Britain but for Western Europe. Perhaps we should not blame too severely the absence of the rigorous analysis which characterizes the other two volumes under review. This is a group product, and one suspects that the Alternative Defence Commission may have had some difficulty in reaching a consensus at all. It is also concerned not simply with the problems of European defence but with a further goal: "making real changes in one's own military dispositions with the aim of bringing about fundamental strategic and political shifts in the nature of the existing military confrontation". This, the Commission believes, can best be achieved not simply by the denuclearization of the defence of Western Europe, but by what they term "de-alignment": the distancing of Western Europe in general, and the United Kingdom in particular, from United States policies and objectives. By its de-alignment, the writers maintain, "the United Kingdom would have earned the right to criticise the USSR strongly where it threatens to undermine the denuclearisation and disengagement process"; while "if Western Europe has rejected any reliance on nuclear weapons and adopted a clearly defensive strategy it would be in a stronger position to plead on behalf of independent peace and human rights groups". "A non-nuclear government", they argue, "acting in parallel with peace and human rights movements, could become the rallying-point for a renewed effort to rid the world of nuclear weapons and could issue a call to all nations to renounce such weapons."

These objectives, of course, beg enormous questions. The first is whether, politically, socially and ideologically, Western Europe can or should be "de-aligned" from the United States. The Commission does admit that "if Western Europe is to promote changes in international relations, it will have to change internally", but about the nature and extent of those changes it remains vague. A radical-socialist Western Europe would certainly pursue a different grand strategy; but to start by advocating a grand strategy and then to consider the political changes necessary to achieve it is putting the cart a long way in front of the horse. The second question is whether a de-aligned, militarily weak but morally righteous Western Europe would exercise more influence, either on the superpowers or within the Third World, than it does at present – an assumption whose validity is far from self-evident, and needs to be argued a great deal more convincingly than it is here.

Whatever one's opinion of these political

objectives, they depend upon the maintenance of an effective, even if non-threatening, defence posture for Western Europe. It is thus appropriate to judge their proposals by the strategic criteria analysed by Luttwak and used by Hendrickson. Their object is "to denuclearise Europe's defence policies (East and West) and make them visibly defensive and non-threatening". It is accepted that the Soviet Union would not necessarily reciprocate with any Western redeployments. Yet even if it did, it is not the threat of Soviet nuclear weapons but of Soviet conventional strength which poses the West's strategic dilemma.

The Commission believes that Soviet conventional attack could be countered by modern defensive technological means, and, if the worst came to the worst, by the resistance, active or passive, of the civil population. The first of these proposals is dealt with, in magisterial fashion, by Luttwak. Even if Soviet military resources were no greater than those of Nato, they could always be concentrated in sufficient strength to achieve a breakthrough (as was done by the Germans against Western Europe in 1940), unless the West had the kind of counter-attack capability (especially in the air) which the Commission would deny them. As for civil resistance, it is precisely to spare the populations the spiralling interaction of reciprocal atrocities to which this inevitably gives rise that Western defences exist at all. The Commission in fact is prepared to concede that western Germany would be the battlefield

Loss leaders

Dominic Hibberd

GEOFFREY REGAN
Someone Had Blundered . . . A historical survey of military incompetence
320pp. Batsford, £14.95.
07134 50088

"War is not capable of a second Error," remarked General Monck, "one fault being enough to ruin an Army." Were that always true, few armies would have reached the battlefield. Sometimes thorough planning has itself been an error, as it seems to have been on the Somme, although those who condemn the 1916 generals for, among other things, sending each man into action with a sixty-pound load might remember – as no doubt the generals did – the officers at Cadiz who marched their forces into the Spanish sun without food or water, or the Commissariat in the Crimea which managed to deprive troops of their personal kit for six weeks in the line. The Cadiz Expedition must still rank as one of the most cruelly inefficient episodes in the history of war. Before it even started, the pressed men included invalids, cripples and victims of revenge: some were blind, one at least was a raving lunatic and one "had not toase to his feet". By contrast, D. H. Lawrence's fury in 1916 at being compelled to let Medical Officers look up his backside seems a privileged man's luxury. Most people would cite the Somme rather than Cadiz if asked for an example of military incompetence, but for the historian of "blunders" Cadiz provides a rich and incontestable catalogue, whereas campaigns as meticulous as the Somme are rather more awkward. The supreme blunder being war itself, most of what happens within and before it can be seen as incompetence from one viewpoint or another, but the historian has to limit his scope.

Geoffrey Regan's *Someone Had Blundered* does not break new ground, although it covers plenty of known territory. He begins with chapters on mistakes by "The Commanders", "The Planners" and "The Politicians", with examples ranging from Syracuse to the Falklands; and then gives case histories of eleven operations, most of them British. His sources are generally books by other historians, but he writes with less awareness of controversy than might be expected, tending to follow one authority on each topic. While his material is often fascinating, he treats it in such a formal way, with factual narratives framed in instructive introductions and conclusions, that one is reminded of those passages that school-

boys used to be set for advanced Latin translation. He also has a habit of retaining distractingly unnecessary details from his sources. "Rejecting this advice Crassus was persuaded by an Arab chieftain named Ariamnes to . . .", but Ariamnes is never mentioned again and, like many other once-cited names, does not appear in the index. Similarly, Regan's map of the most famous "blunder" of all, the Charge of the Light Brigade, gives twenty-five names, but only four of them are mentioned in his text; the map is baffling, all the same, because it does not show the position of Lord Raglan, the crucial point in Regan's two paragraphs on the battle. There is thus a certain irony in his frequent emphasis on the importance of good plans and communication; fortunately such failings are less dangerous in a history book than they are in a war.

Reading these descriptions of disaster, one wonders how anything military has ever succeeded. France was wrong to be on the offensive in 1914, wrong to be on the defensive in 1939. Commanders have been too gentlemanly, like Hamilton at Suva Bay, or too cadish, like the unspeakable Cardigan on his yacht. Planners resist innovations, as the Navy resisted steam and the Army machine-guns, but also ignore traditional methods, as the Navy ignored the potential of the old convoy system in 1917. Conservatism can be fatal, but so can boldness; for all his brilliance, Rupert was defeated at Marston Moor by a dull professional. The master-stroke can be a prelude to ruin; at the Battle of the Crater, a near-perfect mine blew a huge gap in the Confederate line, but the Unionist troops who followed up the advantage got trapped and massacred in the hole. Occasionally, though, the reverse can happen, when blunders lead to victory: the stunning incompetence of the American attack at San Juan Hill had the luck to meet an even more incompetent defence.

Behind the generals are the politicians, towards whom military historians are rarely generous. Regan blames Churchill for Singapore and Eden for Suez, but also denies Lloyd George his traditional credit for the introduction of convoys. He condemns "politicians" for insisting on Goose Green, a battle which he and his sources believe to have been staged to satisfy public opinion; it seems hardly fair, though, to criticize ministers for responding to public pressure, after so much effort by intellectuals since 1914 to bring defence policy under democratic control. Perhaps he should have added a chapter on "The Electorate", which in this century at least has had a much larger share of responsibility for military action and inaction than it likes to think of.

In the conflict zone

M. Hauner

HAFAEEZ MALIK (Editor)
Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan
431pp. Macmillan, £29.50.
0333 408535

The Soviet Union's borders with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan are the only ones where it could still expand without causing too much havoc, whereas along its borders in Europe or in the Far East any trespass could trigger off a third world war and mutual nuclear annihilation. Hafeez Malik, the editor of this extremely useful study, has displayed considerable skill in putting together seventeen diverse papers dealing with this region of potential conflict, so as to give us what he calls "a three-dimensional analysis of interaction". There are certainly more than three "dimensions", however: the Indian dimension, for instance, which is not directly addressed, is very much present in the volume whenever Afghanistan and Pakistan are being discussed; and China's history of conflict and expansion is also directly relevant. Malik believes that both superpowers have developed "remarkable similarities", especially in three aspects of their foreign policy: economic and military aid; the articulation of strategic interests in other continents; and intervention in the affairs of neighbouring or distant states. Certainly, there is a lot to be said on the theme of intervention by superpowers, which can easily escalate into a state of "undeclared war", like the US presence in Vietnam or the present "temporary stationing" of Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

Most of the experts, however, who gathered in December 1984 at the international seminar at Villanova University where Professor Malik directs an institute of Pakistan studies, seem to have ignored his advice and written old-fashioned chronologies of bilateral contacts. There are a few exceptions to the rule. George McChes, a former US Undersecretary of State and ambassador to several countries, unintentionally echoes Lord Curzon's ageless warning when he points out that "any Soviet threat against Iran, through Baluchistan, would constitute a major strategic problem for the United States". Although he does not believe that the Soviet Union would attempt a military invasion of the Persian Gulf, as long as its occupation of Afghanistan continues, the United States should provide economic and military aid to the Afghan resistance and to Pakistan. Morris McCann, reviewing contemporary Soviet options in the three critical States of the "Southern Tier" can find no strategic reason why Moscow should expand further south. Although admitting that the Soviet Union will continue to destabilize Islamabad by exploiting ethnic conflicts in the region, he nevertheless gives the impression that its forces are in Afghanistan by mistake rather than by design. Sooner or later, he predicts under rather vague assumptions, they will have to withdraw. By contrast, Lawrence Ziring reverses the pattern by looking at the strategic problems of the region from the separate perspective of the three "buffer" states. He believes that the Soviet Union has been engaged in Afghanistan in long-term "ethnic and geographic" en-

gineering, with the intention of integrating the northern part of the country with Soviet Central Asia. This grand design, he asserts, cannot be accomplished without dismembering Pakistan and Iran.

It is Agha Shahi, Pakistan's former minister of foreign affairs, who emerges as the star performer of the seminar. With great eloquence he pleads the case of the "Islamic Bomb". Shahi cannot understand – despite a very comprehensive treatment of the subject by Rodney Jones, whose paper is included in the volume – why Pakistan was singled out by Washington as a bad boy for punishment while, on the other hand, the administration had tolerated the nuclearization of South Africa and Israel. The present programme of US economic and military aid to Pakistan of \$3.2 billion (1981-7), is to be replaced this year by another programme of over \$4 billion, but only provided that Congress can waive the so-called Symington Amendment, prohibiting the United States from exporting arms to any country producing nuclear weapons. Many Congressmen will be reluctant to give their approval, especially after the recent revelations concerning Pakistan's clandestine tinkering with the nuclear bomb, and because of the country's negative human rights record. Yet even the best military equipment cannot substitute for Pakistan's lack of cohesion. Shahi appears to reflect this dilemma when he appeals to the Soviet Union to understand Pakistan's greatest predicament: given the choice between the threat of a Pathan rebellion and a Soviet military invasion, Shahi feels that his country should opt for the latter as a lesser evil, "take it on the chin" and suffer the consequences of hot pursuit, rather than fighting the entire Pushtun population.

Iran in Soviet-American relations is the subject of excellent contributions by Richard Cottam, Shireen Hunter, Andrew Killgore and Khosrow Fatemi. Cottam provides the most subtle and sustained criticism of the US failure in Iran, which in his view exemplifies Washington's alliance policy with Middle East leaders in general, seeking those "who are conservative, anti-communist and willing to cooperate with multi-national corporations, American banks and to limit their opposition to Israel to a rhetorical level". According to Cottam the American code-words for these leaders are "moderate and responsible", which obviously cannot be applied to Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers – as the clandestine operators from the National Security Council found recently to their dismay. Most critics agreed that it was impossible to expect the emergence of a coherent US Middle East policy if it continued to be based as hitherto on three objectives: to contain and deter Soviet expansion; to maintain the flow of oil; and to safeguard Israel's security. Cottam then concludes that both Soviets and Americans lost control over "regional dynamics" and that, though it might appear paradoxical, Soviet and Iranian policies appear to be "functionally" allied in the Eastern Mediterranean, as American and Iranian are in Afghanistan, or, paradoxically, US and Soviet interests coincide when it comes to containing the military advance of Islamic activism in Iran through helping Iraq and its Arab allies. That seems to have been the conventional wisdom before the Iran-Contra scandal, which revealed Washington's underhand methods in

dealing with Iranian fundamentalists. While Moscow has been quietly working, mostly through proxies, on regaining its economic influence in Iran, Washington has chosen to boost its naval presence in the Persian Gulf, thus antagonizing almost everybody, including its own domestic opinion.

The last four papers (Ashraf Ghani, Henri Bradsher, Louis Dupree, Nancy Hatch Dupree) are concerned with Afghanistan under the focus of the Soviet intervention. Nancy H. Dupree's chapter, investigating in great detail the fate of the three million Afghan refugees inside Pakistan, opens a frightening perspective: are they becoming the Palestinians of Central Asia? Although the return of the Afghan refugees has been included in the Geneva peace talks as well as in the new appeal for "national reconciliation" launched by the pro-Soviet Kabul government last January,

practical obstacles to resettlement compensation remain almost as difficult to overcome as the fierce opposition by the major political parties forming the Afghan resistance. The absence of the Soviet viewpoint on Afghanistan during the seminar was disappointing, despite the pathetic appearance of Mr Igor Khlevinski, a senior political councillor at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations. The volume, however, contains a collective paper on "Soviet Relations in Pakistan", produced by an academic quartet of the Oriental Institute in Moscow, under the direction of Yuri Jankovsky, who, for some reason never explained, was unable to appear at the seminar. If the Soviets are prepared to withdraw from Afghanistan, as they officially maintain, their scholars ought to make appearances at international conferences and utter their viewpoints with greater insistence.

Economic models

Loren Graham

STEPHEN FORTESCUE
The Communist Party and Soviet Science
234pp. Macmillan, £27.50.
0333 394194

Stephen Fortescue believes that the study of science in the Soviet Union reveals aspects of the country's political culture not often to be found in more conventional research on industry, agriculture, or Party organization. He treats the standard descriptions of the Soviet political system as three different models: the "totalitarian", the "vanguard Party" and the "pluralistic". The totalitarian model emphasizes control from above, either on the basis of ideology or simply by a corrupt bureaucracy that is more interested in power than ideology. According to this model, the existence of independent interest groups in Soviet society is either impossible or irrelevant. Scholars who have supported the totalitarian model include Zbigniew Brzezinski, Boris Melissner and Leonard Shapiro. Specialists adhering to the vanguard Party model identify functional and institutional groups in Soviet society pursuing their own interests, but maintain that the influence of the Communist Party is so much greater than that of any of the interest groups that the latter do not wield genuinely autonomous power in the political system. Leading advocates of this model, in different forms, have included T. H. Rigby and Alfred Meyer.

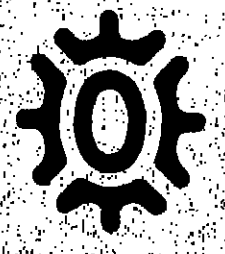
Fortescue's careful political analysis of science and technology in the Soviet Union attempts to answer the question "Which of these models most adequately describes the Soviet political system?" In chapters devoted to Marxist ideology and Party organs on the central, regional and local levels, he finds a striking lack of ability by the Party to control science and technology. Ideology, he believes, has lost all its intellectual content and become merely an arbitrary and often ineffective weapon for the control of personnel. At the same time, he says that scientists and engineers have gained more and more influence in Soviet politics and now "appear to have a capacity to initiate new policies", as society becomes increasingly dependent on the products of science and technology. Fortescue agrees with

Thane Gustafson that the Soviet political leadership, faced with the growing autonomy of science and technology, has realized that "its traditional methods of management and control are inappropriate, and yet it has not been able to find an alternative. This produces a reliance on traditional methods, but only in a half-hearted way."

Fortescue concludes, then, by supporting the pluralist model, although he cautions that Soviet pluralism is different from Western pluralism, being based on "the special and narrowly defined place of a rather limited number of groups in society". Some of the most influential of these groups are the industrial ministries, which have resisted Party efforts to reform the country's economic system.

Most of the work for *The Communist Party and Soviet Science* was done before Gorbachev's arrival on the scene, but if Fortescue is correct in his analysis Gorbachev's policy becomes clearer. The Soviet leader has striven to overcome the past inability of the Party to enact reform by using one of the interest groups, the modernizing scientific intelligentsia, against another, the entrenched industrial ministries still occupied with the mass production of obsolescent goods. Most of Gorbachev's policies have been directed towards winning the support of the intelligentsia against a bureaucracy whose organizational style was formed under Stalin. His reaching out for allies beyond the Party itself in order to reform a resistant industrial establishment is perhaps the best evidence in support of Fortescue's thesis that the Soviet Union is now a pluralist society.

Oddy enough, if Gorbachev fails, Fortescue's thesis becomes stronger than if he succeeds. For if the entrenched industrial bureaucracy defeats the effort of the head of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to reform the economy, one can hardly speak either of "totalitarianism" or of the "vanguard Party". On the other hand, if Gorbachev succeeds, how would one describe a political system where "democracy" and "openness" are enforced from above by the head of a one-party state? It is clear that whether Gorbachev succeeds or fails in his modernizing efforts, specialists on Soviet politics need to re-examine their political models, as Fortescue has tried to do.

The World's Classics		an addition to the library of anyone setting out either to study or merely to begin to read English literature		Times Educational Supplement	
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Sailing through Homer

G. S. Kirk

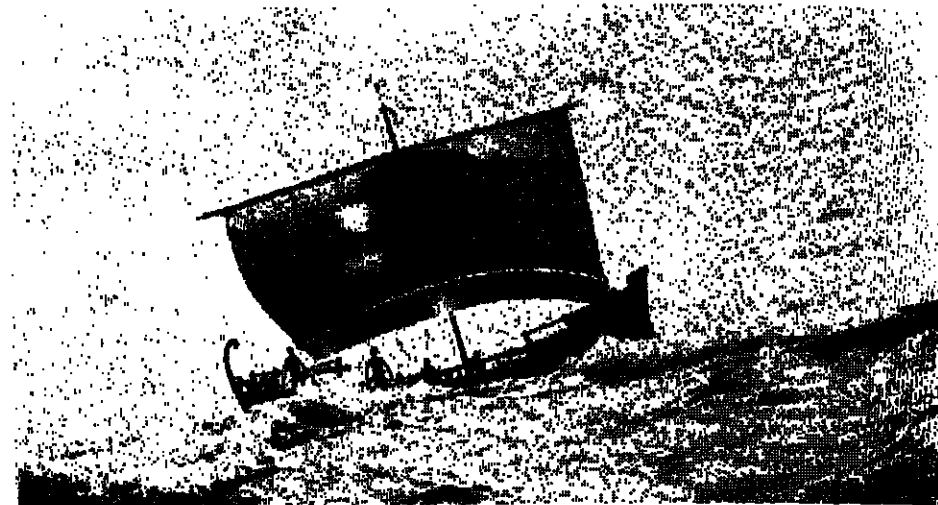
TIM SEVERIN
The Ulysses Voyage: Sea search for the "Odyssey"
 251pp. Hutchinson. £14.95.
 009 1683408

The sea-adventures of *Odyssey* Books Five to Twelve become manifestly fantastic after Cape Malea; yet the game of identifying the hero's enchanted landfalls has been played with daemonic fury from antiquity to this day. The lands of the Lotus-eaters, the Cyclopes, the Laestrygonians; the islands of Aiolos ruler of winds, of Circe, of the Sirens, of Calypso, of the Sun's cattle, of the Phaeacians; the Wandering Rocks and the entrance to the underworld and the passage of Scylla and Charybdis . . . all these have had to be pinned down on mundane maps by eccentric scholars and visionary seafarers alike. Now Tim Severin, a well-known adventurer, has taken his goud ship Argo (built as a vague replica to follow the Argonauts into the Black Sea) for a brief foray into Odysseus' country.

The author is ostensibly strong on methodology and sets up temporary rules for himself, based on mistakes *not* made by Schliemann, or on the post-Homeric treatment of Odysseus/Ulysses. Unfortunately, he has not considered the narrative status of Odysseus' voyage any more thoroughly than his predecessors (for whom, however, he has a low regard). Could Homer have invented Odysseus' sea-adventures out of thin air, he asks, and implicitly answers No. Then did Homer "think that they took place somewhere real? Or was his geography, like his fantastic creatures, without any

footing in this world?" Severin has already concluded that, since "Troy . . . was real", "there had to be some truth in Homer's tales", and soon he is writing "if there was a real Ulysses and he made a real voyage", and this has become the basis for further speculation. Finding a "normal . . . straightforward route" from Troy to Ithaca that "fitted the details" would solve "the riddle of the *Odyssey* . . . on a rational basis" and "bring back Ulysses from the unreal fairyland where the too fantastic and impractical interpretations had effectively consigned him".

So much for the Severin methodology. The truth is that Homer's sailing directions are either conspicuously vague or, more often, entirely absent. From the time when Odysseus' twelve ships are first blown off course until he is landed in deep slumber on Ithaca from a magical Phaeacian ship, his adventures are unmistakably set in a realm of fantasy and fairyland. Few critics are now disposed to deny that Homer made use, for these compelling and exotic tales, of some widely dispersed folk-tale themes (like the one-eyed giant and the "No one" motif), as well as of mariners' tales of terrifying or marvellous places encountered in their voyages outside home waters. Some of the landfalls and sea-passages may reflect impressions gained in the central Mediterranean (for example, the Straits of Messina as Scylla and Charybdis), others the Bosphorus and the Black Sea. None of this can be proved, but much of it is probable. Severin is deceived into considering the western side of Greece itself to be the edge of the known world at the presumed time of the Trojan War; but Greek ships had been regularly traversing the Straits of Messina and trading in the Lipari islands from quite early in the second millennium BC. Let



A detail of Kevin Fleming's photograph of the modern Argo rounding Cape Malea in worsening weather; it is taken from Tim Severin's *The Ulysses Voyage*, which is reviewed here.

Polyphemus be uprooted from Sicily if Severin wishes – it is a purely personal matter anyway; but let him not be shipped off to Crete just because of its wild goats or its folklore, both of which can be found in twenty other places. Calypso's island, unusually, is given a sort of Homeric bearing and distance – it is seventeen days by improvised boat, with a favourable wind, eastward to Scherie. But where is Scherie? Severin follows tradition in thinking of Corfu – but that puts Circe far away and beyond the author's pale, and literary judgment is brought into play: "the entire passage has the ring of a later addition". So much for Calypso – what, then, of Circe? Bearing, eastward from Okeanos; distance, almost infinite – since Aeneas, according to *Odyssey* 12.3f, lies "where are the halls and dancing-places of early-born Dawn and the risings of the Sun". I feel we can be fairly sure that Homer did not wish to pin down Circe's island on any notional map, or desire his audiences to do so either. Yet Severin disagrees. He thinks he knows just where Circe lived; it was on Paxos, a few sea-miles south of Corfu (and even though "there is no archaeological evidence"!)

The author is admittedly intent on finding all the places of the sea-adventures, with the exception of the Lotus-eaters, who seem to be in North Africa, on ordinary sea-routes around Greece. That involves many anticlimaxes. Aiolos' home was Gramvousa just off the north-western tip of Crete: it was called Korukos or "leather bag" at some stage in antiquity, but what an improbable and dis-

appointing place for the home of the winds! Give me Lipari any day, if we are playing that game. Then Scylla and Charybdis are at the north end of the Levkas Canal (the whirlpools in the Messina Strait may have changed and diminished, but at least they are *there*); the Laestrygonian harbour is the odd little Mesapo bay on the Mani peninsula, and so on. Yet Severin's enthusiasm is impressive; even the spiders near his version of Scylla's cave (now occupied by St Anthony) bolster his feelings of infallibility. And when methodology fails, truth may out: Homer "was not writing a pilot book or a gazetteer but an epic".

Chatting through Jewry

A. J. Sherman

TUDOR PARFITT
The Thirteenth Gate: Travels among the lost tribes of Israel
 166pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £12.95.
 0297 790935

Quoting the Hasidic sage Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezeritz, Tudor Parfitt refers to the mystical notion that twelve of the thirteen gates of Jerusalem represent the twelve original tribes of Israel; the thirteenth is "for him that does not know which is his own tribe". That gate must now be wide indeed, for through it surely will pass the mixed multitude who in our day have no sense of tribe, either historically or in terms of their present lives, let alone in any ultimate hope for an ingathering of exiles, a fraternal reunion with their fellows, in some future Messianic time.

Firmly eschewing such larger themes of Jewish identity or human bonding, Dr Parfitt has collected in *The Thirteenth Gate* a series of vignettes that fall into that often engaging genre, travellers' tales from the East. In search of his "lost" Jews, he has visited Syria and Singapore, India, Japan, the Sudan and South Africa, meeting en route practising Jews of several contentious varieties: rich Jews and poor Jews, crypto-Jews, would-be Jews, contented or anxious Jews, and some individuals whose claim to membership of the Jewish community is tenuous to the vanishing point.

What unifies this garland of personal reminiscences is the author's openness to the sometimes fantastic pretensions of his not invariably charming hosts. In these people's eyes their

elves Jews, that appears to suffice, at least for the purposes of this book, whatever rabbinic Israel or elsewhere may have to say on the matter. Thus, instead of detailed descriptions of ritual, belief, or community structure, we are given brief impressions of people and places, dialogues with the natives, and a series of mini-adventures, including a sinister encounter with the secret police in Damascus; being cheated by a wily rug-dealer in Aleppo; and a meeting in Kyoto with one Kampo Harada, millionaire, master calligrapher and mystic believer in his own ancient Jewish origins, among whose household treasures is "a young and beautiful Chinese woman in her mid thirties" who acts as the octogenarian master's "secretary" and is described as having "very red lips, a perfect body and the coldest eyes I had ever seen".

Parfitt's chapters on the sufferings of the Falashas of Ethiopia, and on the dwindling Jewries of Singapore and Bombay, are sometimes moving, but he leaves the reader with many unanswered questions, and his personal horror at the poverty he encounters in India threatens at times to overwhelm his desire to discover how and why Jews survived for so long as a distinct community within the "hundred Indias". Indeed, the mystery of Jewish survival, surely at the core of the millennial speculation and longing surrounding the "lost" ten tribes, eludes Tudor Parfitt altogether, though it is a subtheme in many of the amiable conversations that leaven this travelogue. We are left tantalized, bemused, and must perforce be satisfied with the glimpses to further enlightenment in the very select bibliography with which the author concludes his slender volume.

Reading through Turkey

J. A. Cuddon

LAURENCE KELLY (Editor)
Istanbul: A traveller's companion
 390pp. Constable. £12.95 (paperback, £6.95).
 009 4660301
RICHARD STONEMAN
Across the Hellepont: Travellers in Turkey
 from Herodotus to Freya Stark: A literary guide to Turkey
 248pp. Century Hutchinson. £14.95.
 009 168370X

These two volumes, similar in method and purpose, introduce us to the experiences of the many travellers who, during the past 2,000 years and more, have visited what is now Turkey and was once a part of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. Both are scholarly books for which the editors have clearly done a formidable amount of reading in several languages: they have culled extracts (linked by explanatory comment) from histories, memoirs, diaries, journals, archaeological records, biographies and autobiographies, travelogues, plays and poems.

Laurence Kelly has already produced companions to St Petersburg and Moscow. His *Istanbul: A traveller's companion* (which is illustrated by a number of evocative drawings and paintings from the works of eighteenth and nineteenth-century travellers) falls into four sections: Byzantine Constantinople; Ottoman Istanbul; Approaches to the City by Water; Life, Customs and Morals in Istanbul. The authors he has chosen to quote range from Procopius, Luitprand, Anna Comnena and Pselus, to Robert Graves, Lord Kinross and John Freely (who has written a couple of good guides to the city and one on the whole of Turkey). All the well-known travellers are either mentioned or quoted from, including the Turk Evliya Celebi (one of the best of all travel writers), Pierre Loti ("the semi-canonized friend of Turkey"), the excellent Baudier and de Busbecq, Baron Wenceslas Wratlaslaw, Grelot, Hobhouse, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Captain Adolphus Slade, Byron and Lamartine. There are also extracts from such classic works as *The Harem* by N. M. Ponsel and Van Millingen's books on Byzantine architecture.

I was delighted that Kelly found space for an

excerpt from Thomas Dallam, who had the unenviable job of transporting a large organ to Constantinople in 1599 and presenting it to Sultan Mehmet III on behalf of Queen Elizabeth. He was given a tour of Topkapı Palace, the Sublime Porte, the residence of "the Shadow of God", and he came upon a group of young women playing ball:

They wore . . . faire chaines of pearls and jewels in their ears, coats like a souldier's mandilion some red satin and some of blew, britches of fine clothe made of cotton wool as white as snow and as fine as lawn. Some did weare fine cordovan buskins and some had their leges naked with a goulden ring on the smale of her leg, on her foute a pantiole 4 or 5 inches bre.

The sight pleased him "wondrous well", but he was lucky to escape with his life: inadvertently he had gazed upon the Sultan's personal harem, an offence normally punishable by instant beheading or impalement.

Richard Stoneman, an expert on Greece and the Levant, devotes fifty pages of *Across the Hellepont* to the city of Istanbul and the remainder to the rest of Turkey, arranged on a regional basis. It is a big country and even nowadays travel in parts of it is none too easy; there are large areas seldom visited by foreigners. Until the 1930s travel off the beaten track was often dangerous and was usually done on horse, mule, camel and foot. Even so the author has been able to call on the writings of about a hundred travellers (many the same as Laurence Kelly's), especially Evliya Celebi, William Lithgow, Thomas Coryate, W. J. Hamilton, E. D. Clarke and Richard Davey. He has also referred to a number of recent books (by, for example, Michael Pereira, Philip Glazebrook and John Marriner) and has widened his scope by study of modern Turkish writers (for example, the novelist Yashar Kemal). The poets, ancient and modern, are well represented, and Stoneman even manages a quotation from Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* to describe the capital of Phrygia. Dramatists, too, are cited. For instance, in the section on Tarsus he not only gives us some Strabo and an extract from Layard's autobiography, but also quotes Enobarbus' description of the meeting between Antony and Cleopatra.

Both books help to revive the past as well as to illuminate the present, and both remind us what a perilous blight the Ottoman empire was. Any armchair traveller would find these volumes beguiling, and they should prove indispensable in the field.

The beauty of truth

Brian Pippard

J. G. TAYLOR (Editor)
Tributes to Paul Dirac
 123pp. Bristol: Hilger. £9.95.
 085274 4803

The death of Paul Dirac in 1984, at the age of eighty-two, attracted little notice beyond a few respectful obituaries in the quality newspapers. Most physicists, even, had come to think of him as a historical figure. Had they known it they would have assented to the judgment of that giant of Russian physics, L. D. Landau, "Dirac has done nothing of importance since 1930, and he is the greatest living physicist". In this collection of essays the dismissive implication of Landau's critique is softened a little, without diminishing the overall estimate. The young Bristol graduate who came to Cambridge as a research student in 1923 had by 1930 made such contributions to the foundations of theoretical physics as to place him with Newton, Maxwell, Einstein and a handful more in the highest rank of thinkers. He saw with astonishing clarity, and expressed in mathematics of crystalline perfection, the general implications of Heisenberg's new quantum mechanics, and went on to inquire how this could be reconciled with the space-time unification formulated in Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. Having added

one or two extra, and to his mind essential, postulates that must be satisfied by any set of equations describing the behaviour of an electron, as well as meeting the requirements of the relativity and quantum theories, he found that only one solution was possible. This must have been the first time anyone had dared to say "here, and here only, lies the truth" about a fundamental constituent of the universe. It is difficult to imagine the secret excitement that surely blazed in the mind of this undemonstrative man when he found that his equations automatically contained the precise description of a concept – the spin of the electron – which had been introduced speculatively a few years before to account for some oddities in the spectrum of the elements. And another strange consequence that puzzled others besides Dirac at the time turned out in due course to be one more triumph of his imaginative courage, when the positron, the first known antiparticle, was discovered and provided a most satisfying resolution of the puzzle. With one stroke he had definitively laid down the rules an electron must obey, and, again for the first time, predicted the existence of an as yet undiscovered particle.

It is not surprising that with this approach to problems, with these successes and several other comparable insights behind him, he should come to regard formal beauty as the surest criterion of a correct theory, and to reject procedures that he regarded as inelegant makeshifts even though they yielded new and

important results in marvellous agreement with experiment. Thus in later life, his mind wholly occupied with fundamental theoretical problems, he seemed to others to concentrate more on inventing universes that satisfied his own particular demands than on stumbling through the intellectual thickets of the real universe in search of its peculiar elusive beauty. Inevitably, because of the power of his thought, sparks from his forge lit fires in the minds of others; but after 1930 he ceased to be the leader, and progressively fell back into the part that fitted him best, that of the solitary thinker.

Dirac's unique qualities are fitfully revealed in the book, but in general it must be regarded more as an act of piety than of scholarship to offer publicly the record of private memorial meetings of his friends and colleagues. A mixture of personal recollections and discussions of abstruse points arising from his work will satisfy few; the memoir already published by the Royal Society does a better job in a shorter compass. In due course we may expect a full treatment which will surely benefit from these fragmentary impressions, but will inevitably be aimed at a very special audience for, apart from his work, Dirac's life was extraordinarily lacking in incident.

More perhaps than any other man in my experience he radiated a simplicity that came near to saintliness. It seemed that to him truth was unquarrelable – a thing either was or was not, and ambiguities were foreign to his mind

to the point of excluding appreciation of humour and poetry. Even among friends he played little part in conversation unless drawn by specific questions or tempted into technical discussion, and his silences held no hint of criticism. Inevitably his laconic exactitude gave rise to many stories, some of which are repeated among the tributes. It is a pity Heisenberg never wrote the tale of the journey round the world that he and Dirac took in the early 1930s. Among other incidents, they called unannounced at the University of Hawaii, with an outcome that was recalled a few months later by the President of the university: "Couple of guys turned up, said they were Heisenberg and Dirac and wanted to give a lecture; but I saw through them and had them shown out." They even (as none of his friends would believe) went to a dance together, Heisenberg enjoying every minute, Dirac sitting out alone. In an interval: "Heisenberg, why do you keep on dancing?" "Because it's good fun to find a nice girl to dance with." Long pause, then "How do you know she's a nice girl until you've danced with her?"

One can understand how those who could appreciate the brilliance of his achievements, and penetrate the formidable reserve, should love the man and seek to convey their feelings to others. They must not be blamed too much if they have failed to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, with the rigour and economy that Paul Dirac himself would have demanded.

Destroying the defenceless

Timothy O'Riordan

LESTER C. BROWN (Editor)
State of the World 1987
 268pp. Norton. £14.95 (paperback, £7.50).
 0393 023990

For most of us it is tempting to think that, no matter how serious the plight of the Third World, somehow the earth itself will muddle along. People will die, misery will increase, but the *terre mundis* will still provide a home for mankind. *State of the World 1987* provides little support for such a belief. It is the second of an annual series of reports by the Worldwatch Institute, an American think-tank of international renown, which specializes in the relationship between development and environmental resilience. Last year's volume sold out on a 20,000 print run, and such is the degree of interest in and alarm over this subject that Worldwatch expects to sell 50,000 copies of the current one.

The fashionable phrase these days is "sustainable development", that is, growth that takes place in such a way as not to undermine the capacity of the earth's regenerative systems to replenish its soil, water and forests and to maintain the chemical cycles that ensure the survival of life on earth. But Lester Brown and his colleagues aver that this is not happening. Forests are being depleted to the point where regional climate is being affected, and nearby areas either dry out or become eroded because of unusually heavy rainfall. Soil loss is now so widespread that the cost of maintenance is beginning to show up in the price of farm products. The steady accumulation of carbon dioxide may well increase the "blanket" role of the lower atmosphere so that the earth steadily heats up. This could affect the ice-melt and inundate many densely populated low-lying areas. The authors cite American studies which suggest that as much as \$130 billion may have to be spent on safeguarding the shoreline from a rise in sea levels. Similarly the growing use of pesticides and fertilizers is adding inexorably to the energy cost of food and to the resistance of rapidly multiplying insects, which

can become almost invincible to any known chemicals.

This statistically impressive volume, the result of enormous effort in collecting the latest scientific data, suggests that we may be losing the battle for global survival. The net cost of maintaining the life-support systems could be increasing as we spend more and more of our new wealth on cleaning up the damage caused by our predecessors, though much of the serious disruption is relatively recent. This means that the free capital necessary to shift the emphasis of investment, from mining the environment to nurturing it, may not be available unless we are prepared to endure much hardship. In effect, we either pay in cash or in suffering. One in three dwellers in Third World cities is affected by dysentery or asthma or rickets or some equally debilitating ailment, caused by pollution and inadequate sanitation. These cities survive, but only at the thresholds of discomfort. The cost of fuel-wood in many Indian towns has spiralled tenfold over the past decade as families are forced to spend more of their lives simply walking to and from the denuded woodlands. More labour means more

children trapped into a life of drudgery with little scope for breaking out of the cycle of deprivation. So populations in the poorest countries grow, food production per caput declines and the cost of living rises beyond what is tolerable.

The authors of *State of the World 1987* are good at analyses and prescription but less confident in deciding why this tragedy is occurring. The answer is difficult to prove, but the machinations of international capital flows, the sucking out of profits from impoverished nations, the corruptness of many Third World regions and the remorseless increase in military spending and resistance movements all add up to a structure of power and capital that destroys the defenceless. They know their plight but are unable to avoid the calamities they create for themselves. Worldwatch has provided a valuable service in showing us all what is wrong and what may be the consequences, but it has yet to provide a convincing account of the cause and possible solutions. It should now turn its attention to such matters so as to be more active in obtaining the state of the world it would like to see.

The pattern of a disease

Rosa Beddington

STUART J. EDELSTEIN
The Sickled Cell: From myths to molecules
 197pp. Harvard University Press. £21.25.
 0674 807375

Scientists can devote their lives to studying the pathological aberrations of a particular disease without once confronting someone suffering from it: to them the disorder is a defective molecule, not a debilitated person. In *The Sickled Cell* Stuart J. Edelstein, himself a distinguished biochemist, takes the object of his own laboratory research to demonstrate how a single inherited disease can fuel the imaginations not only of molecular and cell biologists but also of evolutionists, anthropologists and even the unlucky sufferers themselves. In his short, delightfully personal book the reductionist strategies of scientists, intent on unravelling molecular mechanisms or devising therapeutic measures, intermingle with the customs, traditional remedies and animistic beliefs of those African societies in which sickled cell anaemia prevails.

Sickled cell anaemia is one of those accidents of evolution which illustrates better than most the reality of natural selection and the improb-

able chance events through which it operates. Edelstein spells this out with great clarity; he explains how a change in just one of the hundreds of constituent amino acids which go to making an efficient haemoglobin molecule can profoundly affect the three-dimensional structure of this indispensable oxygen carrier. Instead of its normal globular shape the mutant haemoglobin tends to bind to itself, forming complex arrays of rigid fibres. These distort the pliant red blood cells into inflexible sickles which may get stuck in the smallest blood vessels, obstructing them, compromising circulation and oxygen transport, and causing some of the excruciating symptoms of the disease.

Why did a mutation that so obviously reduced the fitness of its carriers survive? Because natural selection can be double-edged – the detrimental characteristics of the sickled cell also happen to furnish a less happy home for the malaria parasite. Consequently, where malaria is endemic there is a distinct advantage – albeit a slight one – to those who carry the mutation, and especially to those who inherit only one copy of the mutant gene and are spared from the disease itself. A similar selection occurred in the Mediterranean where other deleterious mutations affecting haemoglobin, known collectively as thalassaemias, also offered protection against malaria and so

survived in the population. Edelstein discusses the intriguing possibility that diet may have played a decisive role in this balancing act, which fixed different, potentially lethal mutations in separate parts of the world for the same reason.

In certain areas of tropical Africa 20 to 30 per cent of the population carry the sickled cell trait. So, it is not uncommon for two carriers to marry – with the result that a quarter of their children inherit the mutation from both parents, suffer from overt anaemia and probably die in early childhood. While sickled cell anaemia may not be the sole cause of repeated infant deaths in African families, Edelstein considers that it may have contributed to the formulation of certain practices and mythologies related to such deaths found in different tribes across the African continent. At the centre of these myths are the so-called "repeater children": a wicked spirit in the guise of a beautiful child who is repeatedly reborn in a family but always dies in infancy. To monitor such reincarnations, or to prevent the spirit from returning, suspected repeater children are marked (either before or after death) by minor mutilations. That some of these ritualistic markings, such as a shortened finger, resemble deformities which can occur naturally in children suffering from sickled cell anaemia

suggests that elaborate animistic beliefs may have been fostered by the recurring pattern of a genetic disease.

This is an ambitious book, which weaves together many disparate threads and yet is wholly unpretentious in its execution. Using a particularly powerful example, Edelstein illustrates one of the major achievements of the twentieth century: the dissection of the relationship between genes, protein structure and protein function. Without denigrating the pervasive influence of science, Edelstein makes it clear, however, that it is not the answer to everything. He does not moralize, but simply shows us another side, the African side, of the same coin.

In Yellow Fever in the North: The methods of early epidemiology (202pp. University of Wisconsin Press. \$45; paperback \$19.95. 0 299 11110 5). William Coleman shows how, even before the triumph in the 1880s of the germ theory of disease, extraordinary advances in epidemiology were made through case-tracing by two physicians, François Mélier and George Buchanan, who investigated outbreaks of yellow fever respectively in Saint-Nazaire in 1861 and Swansea in 1865. Their conclusions overturned the established doctrine that yellow fever was not contagious.

The ecstatic medium

Eric Hobsbawm

NEIL LEONARD
Jazz: Myth and religion
221pp. Oxford University Press. £15.
019 5042392

Is jazz like religion? Neil Leonard argues that it is, or has been widely treated as such, with numerous references to Max Weber, Troeltsch, Mircea Eliade, Victor Turner, Lévi-Strauss *et al.*, as well as to almost anyone who has written a book about jazz in the English language. The main reason suggested is the capacity of jazz to induce ecstasy unmediated by reflection in both performers and public. Since jazz visibly arouses extraordinary passion and devotion among both players and *aficionados*, this thesis has some *prima-facie* plausibility. The book under review consists essentially of a collection of examples of behaviour which can be interpreted along religious lines. These include examples of the feelings of horror and detestation which jazz used to provoke among white and black *hien-pensants* until the 1930s, and which the "wrong" or "corrupt" kind of jazz provoked among supporters of the "right" or "pure" kind - whatever that was - from then on until the 1970s (Professor Leonard believes that ecumenism is now advancing). Except for the splendid citations from the early days, the material will be quite familiar to all who know the literature.

How far do we want or need to follow the author into the elaborations of his argument? Readers must decide for themselves, faced with, for example, the comparison of jazz movements with "sects, mystically focused on spiritual knowledge accessible only to insiders and introversionist in their desire to withdraw socially and psychologically from an unsympathetic outside world" or with the description of jazz acts as "multi-ethnic, male-oriented, liminal groups which begin as loose, zealous cults, inspired by charismatic musical prophets". However, the author sometimes seems to have doubts. ("Needless to say the presentations of the jazzman and the shaman differed greatly in format, skill, kinetics, preparation and modes of dress." You can say that again.)

The trouble about these of this kind is not that they lack supporting evidence, but that academics (or others) who discover what look like good ideas, can get imprisoned in them. Leonard reminds one of a medieval knight in armour. There are only some things one can do in such a costume, and it seems logical to lie outside the range of a person so accoutred. His conclusion is an example of these limitations. Jazz, he argues, is a response to the vacuum left by urbanization and secularization, particularly "among the spiritually dispossessed metropolitan wastelands". This is merely an extension, by now well beyond the range of evidence and plausibility, of the comparison of jazz with sectarian religion. Since the author accepts that only some of the spiritually dispossessed find affirmations in jazz, and only some jazz followers have been "suffocating in spiritual vacuums before they heard the music", the next question must be: why these and not others? Leonard shows no signs of wishing to address it. If he did, he would undoubtedly

have to reconsider his final peroration, which sees jazz as "a powerful social force which has cut broadly and deeply, its prophets, rituals and myths touching not only individual souls but large groups". That the North American black musical idiom has become the foundation of popular music in the cities of the industrialized west is undoubted. That some kinds of popular music have become, as it were, anthems of large social groups, is also evident. But this is not true of jazz in the restricted sense used in this book, but of other idioms like the blues-based rock (about which not a word is said here). There is no evidence that jazz, as distinct from jazz-based popular music, has ever been more than a minority passion even in the black ghettos. A little counting or quota-sampling of heads or record sales would have been useful here.

Unasked questions fill this book. Is it only in jazz that we find the kind of artist whose "chief characteristic is his power to evoke ecstasy, the source of his charisma or magic attraction"? Would Leonard want to write a similar book about the goddesses (divas) of opera, stage or screen, and if not, why not? Would he include the even more obvious deification of rock-groups? When are references to religious feeling in his source material to be taken literally (as presumably in McCoy Tyner's "John and Bird were really like messengers. In other words, God still speaks to man") and when rhetorically (as, presumably, when Fats Waller announced Art Tatum by saying "God is in the house tonight")? Unfortunately, these are not the author's questions but the reader's.

A good simile is not a theory, even when extended by multiple and often entertaining illustrations. Still, there is something in the simile. And Professor Leonard is obviously in favour of jazz and appreciates its place in American civilization, which is a bonus for the students in the Department dealing with this subject at the University of Pennsylvania, of which he is the chairman.

Learning to swing again

Stuart Nicholson

FRANCIS DAVIS
In the Moment: Jazz in the 1980s
258pp. Oxford University Press. £15.
019 5040902

In the Moment contains what Francis Davis calls "spot coverage" of the "changing mores and methodology of jazz" in the 1980s. Davis is a self-confessed writer to deadlines, and his collection of articles from publications such as *Downbeat*, *Jazz Times*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Boston Phoenix* provides his reaction to both music and musicians in what is proving to be the most important decade in jazz for almost thirty years. The 1960s and 1970s had not been good to the genre; the startling revelations of Free Jazz were unpalatable for the casual listener, while the fusion between jazz and rock in the 1970s proved to be a dilution of two strong blood lines. Throughout, the commercial viability of jazz as a whole receded before the sudden and unexpected rise of rock music, which, to all intents and purposes, forced jazz underground. When



Carole Reiff's photograph of Bill Evans with an unidentified saxophonist is reproduced from her *Nights in Birdland: Jazz photographs 1954-1960*, with an essay by Jack Kerouac (123pp. Simon and Schuster. Paperback, £6.95. 0671 654394).

it re-emerged in the 1980s, it was largely free from the commercial excesses of fusion, contented sixty-minute solos and the self-indulgence of Free Jazz. "As the '70s yawned to a close," writes Davis, "many of the musicians associated with the avant garde began to seek a healing with the jazz past rather than stress their rupture from it."

This realignment, in essence a return to melody, harmony and rhythm, has become known as playing "in the tradition". Some commentators, seeing parallels with the European tradition, call the trend "neoclassicism" but Davis prefers to call it "post-modernism", since, he argues, "neo-classicism is itself one aspect of post-modernism". It is a pragmatic reaction by mainly young musicians, often with formal musical education, who realize that if they want to work as professionals, audiences and recording contracts have to be earned. "The music has to start swinging again," says David Murray, the subject of "The Tenor of These Times" in the opening section, "New Faces": "people don't want music they have to suffer through". The trend is away from art music for art music's sake: Wynton Marsalis, the young trumpet star, is reportedly "scorful of pop, funk, free jazz and anything that strikes him as compromise or sham". The whole jazz tradition is being pillaged for inspiration and innovation and "New Faces" illustrates the broad front on which jazz in the 1980s is advancing: the "Violin Madness" of Billy Bang and John Blake, the vocal talent of Bobby McFerrin, who can "sing like a frog and sing like a girl", the "Swing Redux" of Scott Hamilton and Warren Vache and the trombone versatility of Craig Harris. But it is difficult to agree that the music of Anthony Davis (no relation) will have the pervasive effect on jazz Francis Davis imagines; his namesake seems more concerned with creating a music that defies categorization: within it the European tradition, Balinese gamelan music, improvisation and minimalism are drawn into a whole.

"New Faces" is a mixture of interview and overview, and as Davis admits, takes the form of "advocacy journalism" in that it attempts to "give a voice" to the "new" and "important" music. However, the importance of

some of his subjects, such as David Murray, the pre-eminent jazz musician of the 1980s, might be obscured by accounts of peripheral figures, such as Sumi Tonooka and Keshavan Maslak. A more representative selection might have included the continually evolving Special Editions of Jack deJohnette, Dave Holland's young band, Chico Freeman and European musicians Michel Petrucciani and Willem Breuker.

Davis moves from advocacy to criticism in the final two sections of his book, "Practised Hands" and "Judgement Calls", to present a far more satisfactory perspective. "Practised Hands", as might be guessed, deals with established jazz musicians. His attempt to unravel the complexities of Sonny Rollins, the "greatest living improviser", and his insight into the world of Ornette Coleman reveal an astute student of the music who has taken a fresh look at these musicians in the context of the 1980s. "Judgement Calls" is a collection of critical essays that make one wish that Davis had adopted this approach earlier. He includes a valuable re-assessment of the Modern Jazz Quartet in the light of their 1980s comeback and a down-to-earth chapter on Miles Davis that avoids the hyperbole which surrounded his return in 1981. Miles Davis sounds especially ponderous compared to the sleeker, slicker, funk-influenced jazz of Ornette Coleman, Ronald Shannon Jackson and James Blood Ulmer. . . . no wonder he had Ulmer's group bumped from his 1981 Kool Jazz Festival comeback concert, and no wonder ways were suggested he little his next LP *The Unruly Egoist Is Not Good For Himself*, from a line by the poet Robert Creeley.

Miles Davis "has been trading on credit for too long". Francis Davis sees jazz, not in terms of the survival of an art-form, but in terms of survival of individual musicians. But the best chance for the music's survival has been its return to form: structure, melody and rhythm and its former acoustic grace. Contemporary jazz is music in search of an audience and perhaps its "new faces" can "take heart from the perseverance of Sonny Rollins, Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry, Roscoe Mitchell, George Russell, Wayne Shorter and the other 'practised hands'". Davis celebrates throughout *In the Moment*

Prefabricated virtues

Reyner Banham

ALAN GOWANS
The Comfortable House: North American suburban architecture 1890-1930
246pp. MIT Press. £34.95.
0262 070952

There is clearly something perversely specialized about a book which is called *The Comfortable House* but which does not include a single illustration of an interior (other than a partial view of the kitchen of an Indian *bangla*) among 200-odd plates. If one wants a book that covers American domestic "comfort" in the common-sense meaning, then it is better to read, for example, Clifford Clarke's *The American Family Home*, or even Witold Rybczynski's *Home*.

Alan Gowans's book, like most of his other writings, belongs to a little noted subculture of American architectural history, whose flavour and affiliations are best identified by two of the acknowledgements which precede his text. One is to the director of the American Life Foundation, which (*inter alia*) republished Norris Kelly Smith's remarkable *Frank Lloyd Wright: A study in architectural content*, in which Smith, ignoring Wright's lengthy flirtations with communism (including a visit to Stalin's Moscow), tried to claim him for Christian, entrepreneurial conservatism. The other is to *The Old House Journal*, published for those who buy up Victorian houses, lovingly restore them in every period detail - and then sell them at a healthy profit.

To call Gowans's position "Reaganite" would be to insult his considerable intelligence, but he must still be accounted one of the Populist Right, devoted to many of the same domestic and traditional values as the Republican Party in its more philosophical moments. A purely architectural description of Gowans's Comfortable House would be "a period-style, single-family American suburban dwelling of 1890-1930", but the definition he offers comes loaded with ideology:

an instrument for promoting stability in society at large and the good life for individuals in families; an instrument for meeting and satisfying the immemorial human longing for privacy and space to grow and develop. And, of course, to rise in society.

He does not (he hardly needs to) specify that it should be in a totally inoffensive period style that cannot spoil its resale value, but two lines earlier, he has defined what the Comfortable House is not: "a display case for great wealth . . . [nor] . . . a Machine for Scientific Living, as their Modernist followers insisted". Gowans's dislike of Modernism is a constant theme throughout *The Comfortable House*, but he is too slapdash to convince one that he knows what he is talking about. Thus, in retailing the standard jibes about modern architects not living in modern houses, he spells the location of Sigfried Giedion's apartment in Dolderhof as *Dolderhof*, and claims that Le Corbusier lived at 35 rue de Sévres (his office address - when he first arrived in Paris he lived in the rue Jacob, and when he could afford to build something modern for himself, he did so on the rue Nungesser at Coli, where he remained for the rest of his life). And as for his assertion that "Phillip Johnson did not live in his glass house but in a comfortable eighteenth-century farmhouse up the hill", this was not the case on the occasions when I had the opportunity to observe Mr Johnson's domestic arrangements in New Canaan.

My own faith in his scholarly reliability was initially shaken, however, by his "correction" of mistaken ideas about the origins of the California Bungalow, a house-type close to his central theme of mass-produced domesticity:

Vincent Scully, Reyner Banham, and Harold Krier have attributed invention of the Bungalow form to Charles and Henry Greene and claim for them the first bungalow built, in 1903. On the other hand, Barbara Rubin fully rejects that attribution. . . . Knowing that I had never said anything of the sort myself, I checked the references he gives in Scully and Krier, and found that he (or possibly Rubin) had traduced all three of us. Krier alone mentions the date of 1903, but only to say that in that year the Greene brothers designed a "California house", while none of the same chapter, a date as early as 1888 for the publication of a design that "may

well be the progenitor of the redwood bungalow".

The many errors of fact are a great pity, because they obscure the real value - indeed, the real subject - of *The Comfortable House*, which is an extended study of the forty-year success of prefabricated, ready-cut or mail-order housing in the United States, up to the time of the Great Depression. No single publication to date seems to have brought together so much pictorial material from manufacturers' catalogues of the period, and even if the text is light on technical and economic information, the book will still do useful service as a field guide to the *architectura minore* of American suburbia. Already it has enabled me to add a couple more species (an Aladdin and a dubious Montgomery Ward) to the half-dozen or so that I had identified in my own Californian neighbourhood.

If Gowans and his publishers could be persuaded to make a revised second edition of the book, then the revision should be in the direction of including more illustrations from more of the catalogues that are listed in the massive and valuable bibliography, with much less stylistic nostalgia, architect-baiting and Modernist-bashing. For the sheer quantity of what the Comfortable House industry was able to deliver in those forty years is, in itself, a far more powerful indictment of Modernism than all of Gowans's rhetoric. After all, the inexpensive "factory-made house" for the People was one of the most touted promises of Modernists such as Gropius and Le Corbusier, yet proved to be one of Modernism's most crushing failures. But Gowans is so busy grizzling about the "cruelly impersonal straight lines", etc. of *Modernismus*, that he fails to do more than footnote Gilbert Herbert's *The Dream of the Factory-Made House*, which gives an extended account of Gropius's spectacular failure as a prefabricator. But then, conclusive argument seems not to interest Alan Gowans; he is just a gentle populist lamenting the loss of his own personal comfortable style.

For those visitors of English cathedrals for whom a section in a guidebook is not sufficient, Unwin Hyman has begun publication of the New Bell's Cathedral Guides (192pp each, £10.95; paperback, £5.95), which replace a turn-of-the-century series. Volumes on Westminster Abbey, St Paul's, Canterbury, Wells and Coventry have already appeared; Durham, Lincoln and York Minster are scheduled for next spring. Beginning with a detailed site history and the construction history of the existing building (in the case of Coventry - destroyed in the Second World War, the new church built amid controversy - this occupies half the book), we progress to an architectural walk around the cathedral; an examination of the interior, with its furnishings, monuments and chapels; and a survey of cloisters, chapel houses, cathedral greens and closes. Each volume has sixty or seventy black-and-white illustrations, including photographs.

Eighteenth-century incitements

Henry Potts

ANDREW BYRNE
London's Georgian Houses
208pp. Georgian Press, 26 Charlotte Street, London W1, £16.50 (paperback, £9.95).
0951145908

Andrew Byrne qualified and practised as a quantity surveyor until he became disillusioned with the building trade, and set out to study and explore Georgian London; this book is the result. He has written the text, taken the photographs, made the drawings, has published and is distributing *London's Georgian Houses* himself. The result is a good-looking book at a reasonable price but one that lacks the hand of an editor. Byrne's writing is, at times, rather like that of Daisy Ashford; merchants are always wealthy, ceilings are often lofty and there are even one or two compartmentalised rooms. Without the charm of Mr Salween's

Competitive construction

John Summerson

MAURICE HOWARD
The Early Tudor Country House: Architecture and politics 1490-1550
232pp. George Philip. £17.95.
0540011193

"Early Tudor", meaning fairly precisely the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, cannot be accounted one of the "great" periods of English architecture. It does indeed contain one inspired Gothic creation, Henry VII's chapel at Westminster, the ultimate glory of its kind; and the same monarch gave the sixteenth century a wonderful send-off with his exotically towered and turreted riverside palace at Richmond; the last parts of his son's additions to Hampton Court may have inherited some of its chivalric splendour. There was, of course, Nonsuch, but its overwhelming interest is as a vanished art-historical curiosity rather than a lost work of art. Otherwise the architectural achievement of the early Tudors is ambiguous, and Maurice Howard in his survey of the country houses of the period does not advance any special claims. He does, however, see the great houses (of which he enumerates 246 in an appendix) as richly interesting reflections of political life, as receptacles of new ideas in planning and ornament and as repositories of immensely varied and often admirable craftsmanship. On all these aspects he has much to say that is new and interesting.

The book is mainly concerned with the seats of the courtiers, enlarged, remodelled or (more rarely) built anew as moves in the power-game continuously in play between the courtiers themselves and between them and their sovereign. It was a dangerous game, fraught with many uncertainties. Houses were often built in haste in rivalry with neighbours or to enhance favourable impressions made at court. Exchanges of properties were made arbitrarily at the king's instance and Dr Howard goes so far as to suggest that in the early part of the century "the Crown acted as a sort of clearing-house for country properties".

Seen in this light some of the anomalies in their architecture can be understood. Moats, machicolations and battlements were not, after 1500, very useful means of defence (one has only to look at Henry VIII's decidedly "high-tech" coastal forts to realize this) but they remain conspicuous features of many of these houses. They seem to have constituted a sort of "court dress" or ceremonial armour to depart from which would be to invite criticism and loss of face. Furthermore, a new sense of the past, with Arthurian echoes, had come in with the new dynasty, and this could be patriotically romanticized by castellar silhouettes and displays of heraldry. Internally, things were more progressive; the comforts and conveniences of private life were being attended to, as we see by the privy lodging at Thornbury, constructed by the Duke of Buckingham before his execution in 1521.

A chapter on the courtyard shows how this feature, already developed in earlier castles and collegiate buildings, became a regular item in the Henrician formula. It could be created by adding wings to a simple hall-range, with closure effected by a cross-wing containing a massive gatehouse. This was the ideal, but few surviving houses show it in full array. Sutton Place, near Guildford, plaything of twentieth-century multi-millionaires, would be the perfect model if only its gatehouse wing had survived. Layer Marney has the most spectacular of gatehouses but nothing behind it. For the perfect image we have to consult Kip's aerial views of c1700 and early topographical drawings.

In 1536 and 1539 came the Acts for the suppression of the monasteries and a whole new vista of country-house building opened up. Howard explodes some of the popular myths which have grown round this episode. If some monastic fabrics were destined to end their days in haunted dereliction, later to be recognized as picturesque, a great many more were seen by their new owners as valuable properties which could be made the core of a first-class country seat. There were, of course, difficulties. The unwanted church could only be domesticated by putting in timber floors. An alternative was to use it as a quarry for the new extensions, or simply to leave it, as was done at Newstead, where the west front survives as a transparent Gothic screen, or at Walsingham, where the east front, bereft of its tracery, stands alone in the grounds like a fantastical triumphal arch. The cloister was another problem. It might or might not be incorporated as an inner court. The cloister walks could serve as corridors; they could be raised to provide communication at a second level as was done at Lacock, and Howard suggests that the English country house learnt something about circulation from these ingeniously contrived conversions.

There is a good chapter on "antick" decorations, which historians have sometimes tended to see as evidence of patronage by courtiers anxious to promote "Renaissance" taste. Dr Howard rightly takes a more cautious view. The truth is, most probably, that they are offerings by masons as something delightfully and naughtily different from the traditional run of late Perpendicular enrichments, with just a hint of exotic provenance. It is only with Lacock that we recognize, in John Chapman's work for Sir William Sharrington, a scholarly and sensitive appreciation of Ionic and Doric orders, and here we are on the borderline of a new period. In his final chapter the author takes us across the borderline and glances briefly at Somerset House and Longleat.

The Early Tudor Country House issues from work done for a doctoral thesis and the material is assembled and handled on sound academic lines. It is pleasantly turned out, well illustrated with plans and photographs (some in colour) and is a useful accession to the not very extensive range of studies of Tudor architecture before Edward VI.

WRITERS' BURSARIES 1987/88

The Arts Council intends to award three bursaries of £5,000 to poets whose work is of high literary quality and who have had at least one collection published. The bursaries will be given to finance a period of concentrated work on the recipients' next book. The scheme is open to writers who are resident in England and who write in English.

Further details and application forms are available from:
The Literature Department,
Arts Council, 105 Piccadilly,
London W1V 0AU.
Tel: 01-629 9495 ext. 377

The closing date for applications is 31 December 1987.



West Country rambles

Christopher Haigh

A. L. ROWSE
Court and Country: Studies in Tudor social history
310pp. Brighton: Harvester. £15.95.
07108 11470

A. L. Rowse has written books which other historians could not have written – or could not have written half so well. His *Tudor Cornwall* was pioneering and remains a classic; his studies of Grenville and of Raleigh contain important evidence and insights; and his *England of Elizabeth* is still the best single evocation of Elizabethan society. But he has also produced books which others would not have written – and could not have published if they had. This time, Dr Rowse has ransacked his cupboards and published a collection of unreviewed literary left-overs from earlier works. The predictable strengths and weaknesses of his new book are established in the first chapter, a long essay on "Honor Grenville, Lady Lisle, and her Circle". We enjoy once more Rowse's sensitive mastery of West Country topography, his eye for a good story, his imaginative ability to recreate a context and make its characters real. But we endure opinionated asides, a self-important disregard of the work of other historians, some very sloppy scholarship and much disjointed and merely antiquarian description.

In trying to reconstruct Lady Lisle's attitudes and experience from the family correspondence in the 1530s, Rowse has worked from what he curiously calls "the originals" in the *Calendar of Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII* – but he quotes brief *Calendar* summaries as if they are verbatim transcriptions, and carelessly mangles many of his quotations. He acknowledges the existence of Muriel St Clare Byrne's splendid edition of the Lisle letters (though he persistently misspells her name), but if he had looked at it more carefully he would have detected the inaccuracies and omissions of his own versions. Or perhaps he did notice, and did not care.

The other seven chapters follow much the same model – they are biographical sketches centred on single sources or groups of documents, studies which often add little to well-known material. An essay on Edward Courtenay is almost entirely an account of the corres-

pondence of his Continental travels, and a short biography of Peter Carew is drawn mainly from John Hooker's contemporary life. Chapter Four is a summary (with asides) of William Carnesew's (now published) diary, and Chapter Five relies heavily upon the interesting marginalia in one of Richard Topcliffe's books. The last three chapters, on Henry Cuffe (secretary to Essex), Richard Carew (the Cornish antiquary) and Richard Hawkins (the privateer), all summarize works by their subjects, and then flesh them out with their letters. The best of these essays is on Cuffe, whom Rowse establishes as much more than an ambitious academic turned treasonous toady.

Although it consists of eight disparate biographies, the book does have a certain intellectual coherence. It is given unity by its author's descriptive biographical method, rather than by its invented theme, "the rhythm and reaction between government and social life at the centre and those in the localities". It is given real themes by Rowse's insistent prejudices – his nostalgia for a less philistine past (as if Elizabethans did not destroy their heritage), his worldly-wise distrust of theory and principle, his weary contempt for ordinary people and their abilities. The book gains continuity by the repetition of favourite phrases, scenes and ideas – Henry VIII's "new deal" and "ye olde tea-shoppes spelling"; the Carews rescuing Protestant preachers in Exeter cathedral; Henry delaying too long the divorce from Catherine; the "sensible" vicar of Kilhampton, who held on to his living through the tergiversating English Reformation.

Court and Country is a series of romantic rambles through the West Country past – and not necessarily the worse for that. But there are no good reasons why history for the general reader should not meet minimum professional standards – the title should not be misleading; the book should have something to say, beyond mere description of documents; the quotations should be accurate; the author should be in touch with modern scholarship; the book should have a full and accurate index; and the irrelevant prejudices of the writer should be less intrusive. A book for the general reader, like any book, should be written with care and discrimination. Rowse scorns "those who haven't the strength of mind or character to write down what they know", and perhaps some historians do write too little. Others write too much.

Anglo-Welsh adjustments

T. M. O. Charles-Edwards

R. R. DAVIES
History of Wales
Volume Two: Conquest, coexistence and change: Wales 1063-1415
530pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press/
Aberystwyth: University of Wales Press. £40.
0198217323

In the recent past Wales has seemed to the English a marginal province of the United Kingdom. The only areas to experience any prosperity are also the most anglicized. From the late eleventh to the early fifteenth century, the period covered by R. R. Davies's splendid survey, Wales was closer to the centre of the history of Britain than it has been for any considerable period since, and yet its culture was seen by contemporaries to be strange, sometimes even disconcerting. The only rulers between 1066 and the reign of Edward I not to mount major expeditions into Wales were Stephen and Richard. The former's incapacities as king were first revealed in his failure to sustain Henry I's carefully structured system of control in Wales; the latter was too concerned with affairs elsewhere to be even polite to his father's chief ally among the Welsh princes. The measure of the difference in political skills between Stephen and Henry I, and even, as applied to this island, between Richard and his father, may be perceived from their handling of the Welsh.

Professor Davies's book is a triumphal success. Of all the authors in this series on the

way, the most difficult. The second volume of Sir John Lloyd's *History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest* covers the period 1063-1283. First published in 1911, its third edition appeared nearly fifty years ago, on the eve of the Second World War. The second volume of Lloyd's *History* (far more than the first) has remained, for the better part of a century, the outstanding work of Welsh history. It is a mark of Davies's achievement that from now on the only reason – other than an interest in the history of history – why anyone should consult Lloyd will be the detail of his political narrative.

The perspective has changed fundamentally. Lloyd perceived the history of Wales in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as a noble political tragedy. The sole major centre of interest was in the efforts of the Princes of Gwynedd to unite the native rulers of Wales under their feudal overlordship and thus provide a political expression for the centuries-old nationality of the Welsh. These efforts were cut short by the Edwardian conquest, seen as an untimely end to an emerging Welsh polity, a conquest largely uninteresting in itself except as one of those unifying but all too frequent occasions when Goliath slays David. The quality of Lloyd's scholarship was impressive; still more so was his sympathetic understanding for many of those aspects of medieval Wales to which he directed his attention. Moreover, the underlying attitudes of his work found a ready audience within Wales in 1911 the revival of Welsh culture was in full swing and some Welshmen still hoped that a Liberal Party in which Lloyd George was a commanding figure would do great things for their country. Even when this

Protestant prophecies

Claire Cross

G. J. R. PARRY
A Protestant Vision: William Harrison and the Reformation of Elizabethan England
348pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.
0521329973

In the last year of Mary's reign William Harrison, a newly ordained priest and recent graduate from Christ Church, was converted to Protestantism at Oxford, an event which transformed the whole course of his life. Outwardly his ensuing career seemed conventional enough. After Elizabeth's accession he settled in Radwinter in Essex, where he held the rectory, together with other livings, until his death in 1593. He achieved fame in his lifetime for his *Description of England*, which appeared alongside Holinshed's *Chronicles* in 1577. But it is Harrison's unpublished works, and in particular his "Great English Chronology", permeated through and through by his evangelical Protestantism, which form the basis for G. J. R. Parry's study, *A Protestant Vision: William Harrison and the Reformation of Elizabethan England*.

As a consequence of his deliverance from Rome in 1558, Harrison adopted a dualist approach to history, seeing the English Reformation as but one episode in the struggle between the True Church and the satanic Church of Cain, which began at creation and would continue till the end of time. Reason, for Harrison, had to be guided by the Scriptures, though a proper understanding of history and chronology, which he set out to give, could complement scriptural learning. He believed that throughout the course of history the True Church had waxed and waned in accordance with God's predestinate will: the fulfillment of divine prophecy in the past led on irresistibly to the working out of God's plan for the present age. The Bible, rightly interpreted, therefore offered an all-sufficient guide to the Reformation of Elizabethan England.

Since Harrison's own conversion had come about through preaching, he never wavered in his conviction that the English Church in its entirety could be purified by the preaching of the Word, though he conceded that this victory could never be complete, the agents of the Church of Cain being constantly on the offensive to undermine the Church of Christ. In this ceaseless battle the godly minister played a

crucial part. Harrison's vision, in fact, was both very pessimistic and very clerical. He expected little of the prince, holding with Augustine that worldly rulers existed chiefly to restrain the unregenerate. He considered that the Israelites had sinned when they exchanged their prophets for a king. Even Constantine, who for so many Elizabethan Protestants seemed an ideal model for the supreme governor to follow, gave Harrison no cause for optimism, since his imposition of Christianity upon the Empire had served only to dilute the faith and so weakened the Church in its strife with Antichrist. The inferior magistrates, sharing all the human failings of the prince, could provide no greater protection to the godly; the fickle multitude, always open to the seductions of idolatry, even less. The prophet stood alone to recall the nation to the right way.

This biblically inspired world-view encompassed renovation but not innovation; the evangelical Protestantism of a minister like Harrison did not progress logically to an endorsement of proto-capitalist practices, nor can a necessary link be made between this version of Protestantism, which allowed so little scope for human reason, and the growth of science in the seventeenth century. By reconstructing in such detail the thought of one Elizabethan minister, G. J. R. Parry has shown how great was the gulf between evangelical Protestants and the indifferent majority. He has written an illuminating book, but by no means an easy one.

Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England, edited by Peter Lake and Maria Dowling (231pp. Beckenham: Croom Helm. £25. 0 7099 1681 7), contains eight essays presenting recent research into the Protestant ideology, especially in relation to the society its proponents were trying to convert. Among the chapters are Andrew Hope's "Lollardy: The stone the builders rejected?", "The Gospel and the Court: Reformation under Henry VIII" by Maria Dowling, Catharine Davies's "Poor Persecuted Little Flock" or "Commonwealth of Christians": Edwardian Protestant concepts of the Church", "A Rare Example of Godlyness Amongst Gentlemen": The role of the Kingsmill and Gifford families in promoting the Reformation in Hampshire" by Ron Fritze and Jane Facey's "John Foxe and the Defence of the English Church".

hope faded, those of a nationalist persuasion saw in Lloyd's *History* an essential reminder that Wales had not always been a mere province on the borders of England. One of the noblest poems in the Welsh language is a *marwnad*, an elegy, for Sir John Lloyd; the poet was the first president of Plaid Cymru, Saunders Lewis.

For the political achievements of Gwynedd, Lloyd provided a full and sympathetic narrative. Three topics were, however, relegated to the shadows: the history of the March; the nature, and also the consequences in the fourteenth century, of the Edwardian conquest; and, finally, the social and economic changes of the period. Of all three Davies has provided a lucid and well-balanced, and yet also a vigorous, account. We can now see how far the Welsh accommodated themselves to the new post-Edwardian order, and also the ways in which that order offended the Welshman's sense of his inherited status at the same time as it emptied his pocket. The internal history of the Marcher lordships and their relations with both the rulers of England and the Welsh princes are fully explored. The extent of the transformation effected by population growth, by immigration from England, by the spread of monetary exchange, of markets and towns, is carefully measured. We now have a history of all Wales, not just a political narrative from the standpoint of the princes of Gwynedd. Glamorgan, for example, which got the scantiest mention from Lloyd, now receives its full due. When reckoning the deficiencies of earlier scholars it is often difficult to do justice to those themes which were nearest to their hearts. Lloyd's *History* was, of course, particularly

patria was unquestionably *pura Wallia*, the lands of the native princes. A reading of a passage such as his concluding verdict on Llywelyn ap Iorwerth would convince most scholars that a fundamental shift of viewpoint was overdue:

Among the chieftains who battled against the Anglo-Norman power his place will always be high, if not indeed the highest of all, for no man ever made better or more judicious use of the native force of the Welsh people for adequate national ends; his patriotic statesmanship will always entitle him to wear the proud style of Llywelyn the Great.

Perhaps it is just as well that many years have passed since 1911: one shudders to think what a positivist-minded historian writing in the 1950s might have made of the theme of medieval Welsh national consciousness. For, indeed, there was such a consciousness, as Lloyd rightly saw. It is one of the chief merits of Davies's book that he conveys, with a perceptible sympathy, the nature of that consciousness, reared on memories of Vortigern and Hengest and on prophecies of Cadwaladr the Blessed and the nemesis of the English. It is not easy to penetrate and to explain the ideology of a remote culture, already strange even to a half-Welsh contemporary such as Gerald of Wales; yet Professor Davies does the job with so sure a hand that one may be tempted to ignore the achievement.

Conquest, coexistence and change: Wales 1063-1415 fully deserves to take the place of Lloyd's *History of Wales* as the book in which more than any other within the discipline of history, the Welsh may perceive the distinctive nature of their past, and through which the non-Welsh may come to understand Wales.

Interruptions in progress

Arthur C. Danto

HANS BELTING
The End of the History of Art?
Translated by Christopher Wood
120pp. University of Chicago Press. £13.50.
0226042170

In virtue of a familiar, transparent ambiguity in the word "history", Rosencrantz and Guildenstern might have distilled a mild drop of undergraduate amusement from "The end of the history of the Roman Empire was not the end of the history of the Roman Empire". Like all sophisticated jokes, this one also expresses a philosophical truth of a certain depth: the historical representation of the Roman Empire can only have begun in earnest when its history had run its course and historians could say how it all came out. Until then its histories would be tentative and segmentary – annals and chronicles.

For slightly different reasons, the history of art, as an academic discipline, need not be greatly affected "When Earth's last picture is painted / And the tubes are twisted and dried". Indeed, aside from a suspected minority of art historians concerned with contemporary art as if it were already past, art history, as a conservative profession, mistrustful of theorizing, would behave much as it does behave if art itself were to come to an end. It is as if the relevant past were already in place and there were plenty to do without new art being made at all.

The interesting case to consider is what would happen to the history of art if art history itself were to stop. Could art-making survive the cessation of any historical interest in its taking place? It may seem odd to think that art-making, an activity I have recently been told has always, in its most enduring instances, been "largely instinctual and wholly intelligent", might falter were the historical consciousness of it to disappear. But such is the practice of art in the West that consciousness of participating in a history of a certain sort was a condition for participating in that history. The practice of art has always been penetrated by an internalized historical representation of that practice. And the penetration is sufficiently deep that the practice might not long outlive the erasure from consciousness of historical awareness.

Hans Belting is a distinguished historian of art. His subject, in the two essays that compose this brief, intense, meta-historical meditation, is a crisis in art-historical consciousness induced by the advent of modern art:

Art history as an academic discipline was established before modern art appeared. It was often practised alongside modern art, as if the latter did not exist at all. In the meantime, modern art has been absorbed as one of its historical objects, without the art historians knowing quite what they should do with this newly inherited responsibility.

The philosophical structure, which artists themselves accepted as defining the process in which they were engaged, and which at the same time defined the way in which art historians represented that process, was that art is an essentially progressive enterprise. Its conditions were effectively laid down by Vasari. Vasari, sometimes pictured as a second-rate Mannerist, a gossip, and an unreliable biographer, has been emerging in recent times as a profound philosopher of art history, and the better of Belting's two essays is devoted to Vasari's fateful formulations.

For Vasari, the history of art was the progressive fulfilment of a certain classical norm of beauty. The Vasari-paradigm has just been put, brilliantly, into a nutshell by the art historian David Summers in his book *The Judgment of Sense: Renaissance naturalism and the rise of aesthetics*:

As classical art developed and declined in antiquity, to be forgotten, misused, and transformed in the Christian Middle Ages, they to re-emerge in the Italian Renaissance; so the intellectual counterpart of classical art, a version of the Platonic idea, waxed and waned, re-emerged in late Medieval and early Renaissance naturalism, bloomed fully in the high Renaissance, and, having put aside the perturbation of Mannerism, was finally re-established in the theory of academic classicism.

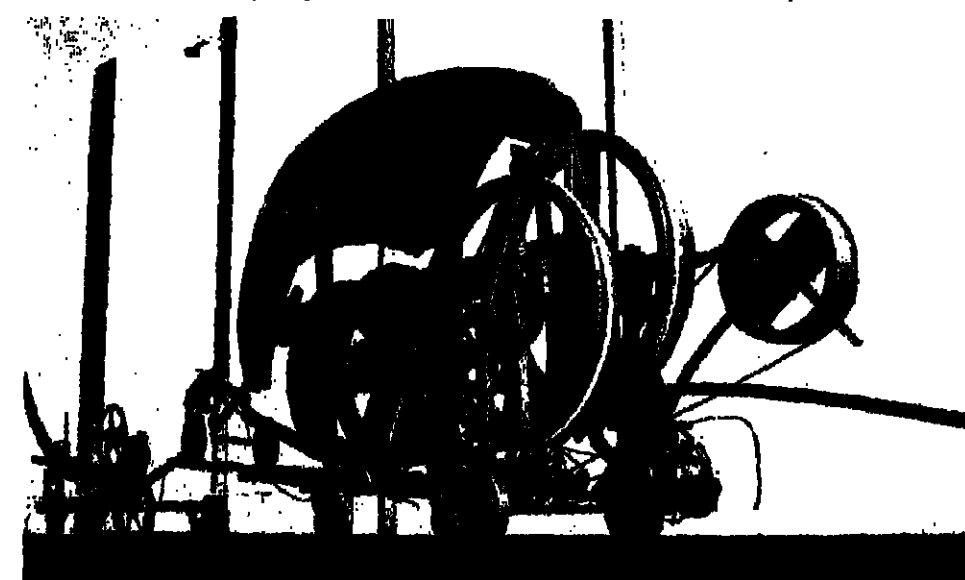
Classicism specified the norm to which painting and sculpture aspired. Naturalism specified the programme of representation in which

artists who so aspired participated. This would in effect be the story of making-and-matching which Gombrich narrates so compellingly in *Art and Illusion*. Giotto, Masaccio and Michelangelo marked stages of technical advance in the conquest of visual appearance, as the childhood, youth and maturity in a programme of cognitive growth modelled on a natural biological analogy. The discovery of perspective by Brunelleschi was a high-point in the historical progress artists were conscious of being part of, much in the way in which scientists thought of themselves as collectively driving back the frontiers of ignorance – or did so at least until they read Kuhn, who appeared to knock the props out from under the progressive model of the history of science.

Modernism appeared to knock the props out from under the reigning progressive vision of

consider the history of art as strictly concerned with the evolution of forms. This, Belting argues, "implied the final divorce of art from history", chiefly, if I understand him, because in excluding content, one excludes the "reference to world and reality" to which the art of a given moment is a response. I have had students tell me of courses they took in Baroque art taught as if the paintings were so many exercises in undulant forms, as if the urgency of the Counter-Reformation and the imperatives of ecclesiastical patronage and the purposes of Christian representation were so much historical background for, but essentially obstacles to the understanding of, the art in terms of formal design.

But if formalism is too thin, how are we to proceed? "Is it at all possible", the author asks, "to embrace in the same conspectus traditional



Jean Tinguely's "Hamilbal II", 1967. It is reproduced from Pontus Hulten's *A Magic Stronger than Death: Jean Tinguely 1954-1987* (384pp. Thames and Hudson. £35. 0500 27489 4).

the history of art. Art history as an academic discipline was, as Belting observes, largely in place before this happened, and its subject was structured, as its critical standards were framed, in terms of the historical conception on which modern art turned its back. The question then was what to do once it was perceived that its presuppositions rested on sand – other than to bury its head in that sand: how is an essentially non-theoretical discipline to undertake the theoretical labour required to meet the challenge? The end of art history as an inquiry that could take the form of its subject as given, is the subject-matter of Belting's reflections in this book.

One response, of course, is the not unfamiliar reflex of denying that modern art is art, a posture increasingly difficult to maintain in the light of the stunning achievements of twentieth-century art. Another is to insist that modern art does not essentially violate the paradigm and thus "to deny that the breaks which had occurred in any way threatened the imaginary continuity of eternal art". But in fact one can defend a "meaningful continuity and direction" only by putting together a definition of art that shows how modern artists were after all doing the same thing *au fond* that artists in the classical progress had always done. But to assimilate the "Démolisseurs d'Avignon" or Matisse's "The Green Stripe" to a norm of classical beauty that anyone in the tradition would have recognized as such seems *prima facie* unlikely. As advanced as critics as Baudelaire appealed to a transcendent norm of beauty in order to justify his own radical defence of Constantin Guys as "the painter of modern life". But it would be difficult to do anything similar in order to enfranchise as part of the same history the great painters of modernism. Once that norm is given up or, which comes to the same thing, distorted beyond recognition, it becomes more and more difficult to say what it is, the history of which art historians are writing. Perhaps, as Gombrich says in his famous textbook, there is no such thing as art, only the lives of individual artists. But this is to lose the spirit and merely preserve the appearance of Vasari's crucial book: the history of art dissolves into a chronicle of concatenated biographies. But surely more is involved in the invention of Cubism than the biographical fact that Picasso and Braque did it.

A different response, one which furnished a justification for such institutions as the Museum of Modern Art in New York, was to

and modern art, so profoundly divided?" And, making a possible virtue out of a tentatively negative answer to his question, he concludes, somewhat lamely, "It is perhaps more appropriate to regard the interrogation of the medium of art, of historical man and his images of the world, as a permanent experiment." But as Kant would say, experiment without theory is blind, as theory without experiment is empty, and the problem of historical unity one seeks to avoid by averting to the concept of experiment is left intact and urgent. It is the problem of what art is. One way of reading modernism is that it raised that question in a new way, having found the old answers no longer adequate.

It is instructive to interpret the deferred crisis in art history as in fact a crisis in the history of art, and to see both in the context of a powerful analysis of the place of art in the history of consciousness by Hegel. In his *Lectures on the Fine Arts*, delivered in Berlin for the last time in the Winter semester of 1828, Hegel concluded, on the basis of the most comprehensive philosophy of art history (in both senses) since Vasari's, that art had come to an end. Or at least "Art, considered in its highest vocation, is, and remains for us, a thing of the

past." Notwithstanding the extraordinary amount of extraordinary art produced since 1828, as deep a thinker as Martin Heidegger was able, in 1951, to say "The truth of Hegel's judgment has not yet been decided." Such a decision can only be made, Heidegger suggests, "when we have first taken into consideration the nature of art". And this was Hegel's thought as well: "Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is." The internal connection is no longer between art and its own history, but between art and its own philosophy, and this must raise for art history precisely the sort of crisis it is to the credit of Belting's important essays to have brought to theoretical consciousness. But this gives us a way of interpreting modernism that Hegel foresaw, without, of course, having been in a position to foresee what form it was to take. Not even Hegel – like the rest of us, after all, anchored to his own historical moment – could have envisioned Picasso, Duchamp, Pollock or Warhol.

In my own view, the history of modernism is in fact the story of experiments in self-definition, an endeavour on the part of art to determine what its own nature is from within. The problem of the nature of art becomes part of what art is in the modern era, and its high points are in such works as those of Duchamp or Warhol, who put the question in its purest philosophical form: why is something an artwork when something else, that resembles it perfectly, is merely a thing? The question, now inescapable, demanded an answer neither art nor history, but only philosophy, has the resources for dealing with. And in generating a new philosophical structure out of itself, a new way for art to be historically represented begins to be visible. The form given art, required to be seen as having a certain history by Vasari and then by academic art history, is but the first moment in this new structure, as Hegel would say. Modernism, he might also say, negated, preserved, and transcended that moment, and we are in a phase of the history of art only an adequate philosophy of art can specify. My thought is that we cannot fully deliver such a philosophy of art, until we have a better understanding of what philosophy itself is.

Hegel never supposed that art would stop dead in its tracks when its deep history came to an end, and it turned into philosophy. It is only that the products of art would be post-historical. Contemporary pluralism is as good an illustration of the post-historical condition of art as can be imagined. Art history, as a discipline, is also in its post-historical phase, carrying on its investigation within a framework that has lost its energy, whatever it may derive from its institutionalization in museums and universities. All of us, historians, philosophers, artists themselves, are caught up in a philosophical investigation into our respective interlinked identities. But Hegel also wrote, "When philosophy paints its grey in grey, there has a form of life grown old." Belting's concern is with a form of life trying to be born, but one which paradoxically requires philosophy as its midwife.

CAMBRIDGE

Lewis Carroll and the House of Macmillan

Edited by MORTON N. COHEN and ANITA GANDOLFO

This volume contains almost all the letters that Lewis Carroll wrote to his publisher during a professional relationship that spanned the last 35 years of the Victorian era. It provides a fascinating record of the contemporary evolution of publishing, and charts the growth of the House of Macmillan from modest beginnings to its status as a leading publisher.

... anyone interested in the business of publishing will find this immaculately edited book fascinating. *The Daily Telegraph*
394 pp. 0 521 25602 X £45.00 net

The Correspondence of John Ruskin and Charles Eliot Norton

Edited by JOHN BRADLEY and IAN OUSEY

This book presents an accurate record of the exchanges between Charles Eliot Norton, Professor of the History of Art at Harvard from 1875 until 1898, and his intimate correspondent John Ruskin. The letters they exchanged contained revelations so candid that Norton sought to efface his side of the correspondence almost entirely. The editors present a far more complete record of the correspondence than has been available before.

There is enough ... to satisfy the hungriest adventurer who wants to explore the mysterious world of Ruskin's mind. *The Spectator*
550 pp. 0 521 32091 7 £45.00 net

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, England

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Austrian notes

Robert Knight

I've now twice seen Dr Waldheim in the flesh. On both occasions he was at the Heldenplatz inspecting a brass band. But where will he be next March, the fiftieth anniversary of the "Anschluss" (here inverted commas are *de rigueur*)? Discussion about how to commemorate this embarrassing birthday is now getting under way.

Those responsible for the official side know that almost anything they come up with will probably rebound. A national day of mourning will make an odd contrast to the famous film footage of jubilant crowds greeting Hitler's homecoming into Vienna. Concentrating on the reasons for the collapse of the First Republic and merely repeating that "the West threw us to the wolves" will look like a tactic to divert attention from what happened during (and after) the Third Reich. (It will also increase the antagonism between the "black" and "red" parties of the present-day coalition.) On the other hand, even the least cynical observer may consider that last-minute National Gestures of Reconciliation, like the renovation of Jewish synagogues, smack of opportunism.

The exhibition planned for Vienna's town-hall will, probably wisely, avoid the grandiosity of *Myth and Reality in Vienna 1900*. But will it be able to strike the right note of critical understanding? In the long run, self-critical scrutiny of the Austrian role in the Third Reich should be cathartic, but in the short run – especially in the consensual climate of a Grand Coalition – it is probably unrealistic. In his opening speech to the Salzburg Festival, Waldheim warned against "austro-nazism" and preached the virtues of self-confidence. He certainly shows no lack of the second. But does he have enough of it for a historic speech on Austria and the Anschluss? And if so, what lessons will he draw from his rich experience on General Lohr's staff in the Balkans?

The first snowball of what by next March will no doubt be a deafening avalanche of publications has already started down hill. It is *März 38* by Erwin Schmidt (336pp. Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, Sch. 498, 3.215/0694 7), a meticulous hour-by-hour military reconstruction of the details of the weeks preceding the Anschluss. Schmidt stresses the degree to which the autochthonous Nazi "revolution" had already taken place in many towns well before the Wehrmacht had arrived. And

he brings out the worst aspect of Austrian "self-help": the antisemitism which was one vicious step ahead of the official Nazi measures. Schmidt's version is confirmed from the other side in a pioneering study by Thomas Albrich of the desperate plight of the estimated 180,000 Jewish "displaced persons" who used Austria as a stepping-stone to Palestine after the war. In *Exodus durch Österreich: Die jüdischen Flüchtlinge 1945-1948* (265pp. Innsbruck Hayman: Sch. 265, 3 85218 034 7), Albrich argues that 1945 was no "Stunde Null" (zero hour) for Austrian antisemitism. Although they were a relatively small percentage of all displaced persons, were supported financially by the Allies, not the Austrian exchequer, and in any case were intent on leaving Austria as soon as possible, Jewish DP's were turned into bogymen by some Austrian politicians and journalists.

Last autumn, I got into hot water over an article in the *TLS* (October 3) for, *inter alia*, my statement that "Antisemitism remains stronger in Austria than in any other western European country". The then foreign minister Peter Jankowitsch took exception (his alternative candidate was France), and perhaps the claim was arguable. Yet it is difficult to imagine where else you could hear such a flow of anti-semitic comments as those which were made recently outside St Stephen's Cathedral. What sparked them off was a round-the-clock "conscience vigil" paying tribute to Austrian resistance and warning against the "I-didn't-know-anything-I-never-saw-anything attitudes of one particular Austrian". Comments I heard ranged from the rabid ("Fifty years ago you wouldn't have been grinning like that, Jud!") to the sweetly reasonable ("Then tell me why are there so few Jewish mechanics and so many Jewish doctors?")

And is there any other Western country where a politician of the second largest party could survive after comparing the attitude of the President of the World Jewish Congress, Edgar Bronfman, with that of his "fellow-believers" responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus? The statement came in a letter written ("as an Austrian, a Christian and a trained lawyer") by the Deputy Mayor of Linz, Carl Hödl. In Hödl's view, Bronfman "and his ilk had both spread throughout the world the 'talmudic principle' of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth', and got others to do their dirty work for them. (Then Pontius Pilate, now the American Justice Department.) Hödl later ex-

plained that he hadn't wished to compare Waldheim to Jesus, that he didn't know what an antisemite was, though he knew that he wasn't one, and that he intended to stay in office. Despite protests and posters demanding his resignation, he probably will.

Vergangenheitsbewältigung – "mastering" or "coming to terms with" the past – must be the most overused word in present-day Austria. But whatever it may mean, open access to archives is clearly an indispensable element. For years, Austrian historians have been chafing at restrictive and arbitrarily enforced archival regulations. Though there is no archive law, there is (in theory) a forty-year rule in force in the central State Archives (and a fifty-year rule in many of the provinces). But even if a historian gets inside an archive, the Data Protection Act is there to keep him or her at bay. At recent conferences in Vienna, one in June, one last week, it emerged in discussion that it is far easier to research post-war Austria in Washington than in Vienna. It also appeared that Data Protection does not, as had previously been claimed by the archival authorities, cover personal details about the dead.

The assembled historians complained heatedly about having to depend on the "clemency" of authorities, while the archivists pointed out that they were overworked and understaffed, and expressed fears of prying, unscholarly journalists. Perhaps the ultra-modern *Archiv der Republik*, due to open next year in a Vienna suburb, will bring corresponding modernization of archive policy.

Baedeker's 1891 Handbook for travellers in Southern Germany and Austria, "including Hungary, Dalmatia and Bosnia", recommends (page vi) *Waldheim's Conductor*, which appeared monthly in Vienna, providing "information as to the departure of trains, steamboats and diligences". Hard not to feel a twinge of *mitteleuropäische* nostalgia when coming up on the train from Ljubljana (Ljubach) via Maribor (Marburg) and Gra(z) (Gradec), especially on realizing that the day-long journey on that route from Trieste (Trst, Trieste) to Vienna (Wien, Dunej) is only about two hours quicker now than it was in 1891. But then, travellers in 1891 had no frontiers to negotiate. And even if they had, there would have been little to worry about. "Passports", the book tells us, "are no longer required in Austria."

tion by Mr Luce, puts the stress firmly on developing the last of these, pushing the Council in effect further into a lobbying-and-marketing role.

Last year's Report of the Enquiry into Professional Theatre, chaired by Sir Kenneth Cork, *Theatre is for All*, anticipated some of the consequences, in its suggestion that the logical next step is for the Council to give up direct dealings with drama (and the other creative arts) altogether: "We . . . envisaged the Arts Council itself as an organization with individual subsidiary companies, who promote and run their own businesses." Under this scheme the present Drama Advisory Panel would be reconstituted as a Drama Board, and take on the job of formulating policy, allocating funds to national companies, and advising regional arts associations. In other words they would take on the "business" of drama, leaving the Council to concentrate on the drama of business. "The entrepreneurial skills of the Arts Council Secretary-General and his senior management should be applied to the major issues of policy and funding and not continually be bound up with every day art-form matters."

The Council has not yet pronounced on this awkward proposal, which would have the effect of reconstituting the client-oriented approach, and separating the getting from the spending; however, there is no doubt that funding will keep them busy. They have already set up a new Marketing and Resources

department whose brief includes developing support for the arts from the private sector. And it looks very much as though they may have to spend a good deal of time and energy persuading the minister that their clients are not malingering. His own 1986-7 "arts marketing scheme", which offered awards to arts organizations for projects designed to "increase their audiences and/or improve financial returns" has mostly served, according to the Office of Arts and Libraries, to reinforce his concern "that many arts bodies lack real marketing professionalism". Winners include the Aldeburgh Foundation ("purchase of mailing list of 'connoisseur consumers' belonging to similar arts organizations") and Temba Theatre Company, Southwark ("production of promotional video and Fact Pack") while unsuccessful applicants are sent away with a flea in their ear and the offer of a one-day professional consultancy. The scheme will not be repeated, and the minister is "considering other ways of helping the arts to help themselves".

A further area where lobbying and ingenuity will be required is almost certainly, ironically enough, in dealing with the success of the drive for business sponsorship. This involves another ministerial scheme whereby funds from first-time "givers" were matched by government up to £25,000 (and in the range of £3 to £1 thereafter). This scheme has really taken

In brief

Once again John Willett, the distinguished Brecht scholar, is trying to cross swords, or at least cross letters, with one of our national theatre companies about their practice of commissioning versions of Brecht plays from writers with little or no German. What has prompted Willett to make public his recent letter of complaint to the RSC's Literary Manager, Colin Chambers, is the prospect of the forthcoming production of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* in a version by Fay Weldon, who is not fluent in German. In his letter, Willett also regrets that though the RSC had acknowledged his offer of help with their last "rather disastrous production" of *Mother Courage*, they had, without informing him, "commissioned a new translation by the author of *My Beautiful Laundrette* and the director's wife". Of Weldon, he complains that she "has to have a German-speaking helper and therefore can hardly have much ear for the tone of Brecht's dialogue." Such disputes about Brecht translations are not new. Howard Brenton's version of *Galileo* for the National Theatre was the subject of much debate during a conference, which Willett helped to organize, about translation in the theatre (see the *TLS* of September 12, 1980). Colin Chambers, when asked about the issue, praised Willett as a Brecht scholar but insisted that "all writers need to be revalued with each generation – linguistically as well. We've got to do the new, which is not necessarily the best, to keep the theatre alive."

Champions of Yevtushenko and Brodsky have been clashing recently in the Letters page of the *TLS* about the moral position of Russian writers in and outside the Soviet Union. In an interview (as yet not broadcast), recorded last month, Yevtushenko himself told Zinoviy Zinik and Masha Slonim of the BBC Russian Service that the divide between Russian literature in exile and that inside the Soviet Union will be bridged when émigré writers "approach us with a clear conscience and clean hands, talk to us as one human being to another, instead of indulging in extremist political statements". Zinik, whose novel *The Mushroom-Picker* will be published by Heinemann in January, was certainly one émigré writer who was not impressed: "Yevtushenko once again implied that in the Soviet Union literary processes are dependent on Soviet ideology and that only those who remain loyal to the Soviet apparatus can be published." He was also critical of those in the West who favour Soviet "officially approved liberal tendencies which also reject émigré literature as a black sheep of the family unless the writer is dead". He complained that émigré writers were excluded from the Russian seasons on Radio 3 and at this year's Edinburgh Festival: "Imagine for a moment an English season in Moscow in which the works of such expatriates as Graham Greene and Anthony Burgess were ruled out."

Strange scenes at the Royal Opera Theatre, Scarborough. *Women without Men*, a new play by Kathleen J. Smith, was accepted by the theatre and had its world première scheduled for October 12, although no one at the theatre had actually read it. Then, after seeing a report in a local newspaper which described the play, the owner of the theatre, Mr Don Robinson, cancelled it, calling it "repulsive". Ms Smith is a former assistant governor of Holloway women's prison, and *Women without Men* is set in the long-term wing of such an institution. The play was accepted by the theatre management on the strength of a publicity leaflet saying it was about "a conflict between . . . a child murderer who claims to be a reformed character, and a senior prison officer who hates her". It continues: "Though Myra Hindley is not mentioned in the play, the central theme: undeniably suggests the problems that a murderer of her type presents in a prison." Mention of the Moors murderer was what caused Mr Robinson to ban the play. Ms Smith is now at pains to emphasize that her play is not about Hindley, while admitting that she wrote the offending leaflet herself. *Women without Men* will now open at the Pomegranate Theatre, Chislehurst, on October 21.

Letters

Arturo Toscanini

Sir, – Several of Michael Tanner's dismissive remarks on Toscanini, in his review of Joseph Horowitz's *Understanding Toscanini* (September 4-11), need challenging. The glib analogy he draws between the companies who sponsored the NBC orchestra broadcasts – General Motors, Reynolds Metals – and the music performed, merely reflects the conditions prevalent in American commercialized radio. He might have cited equally ridiculous "messages" from a pharmaceutical company or the American Government (in 1947) urging the nation to save food to guarantee the peace, and support its country's role in international affairs.

To describe the performances of "the late 1940s and early 1950s" as "streamlined . . . unlovely . . . music-hating" is to travesty such remarkable achievements as the Berlioz *Romeo and Juliet* (1947), Act Two of Gluck's *Orfeo* (1952), and the series of Verdi performances – Act Four of *Rigoletto* (1944), *Otello* (1947), *Falstaff* (1950), the *Requiem* (1951) and *Un ballo in maschera* (1954) – that many listeners would regard as classics of the gramophone. To describe Toscanini in rehearsal as "screaming incessantly in Hitlerian tones" is an amazing distortion: most of the rehearsals show him working intensively to achieve orchestral accuracy, balance and expressiveness, as in his frequent urging to "cantare". True, he was short-tempered and behaved badly to the orchestra – quite unlike Furtwängler or Beecham or Bruno Walter – and his voice may have been hoarse, but "Hitlerian" is an unworthy sneer, especially given Toscanini's unwavering hatred of Hitler and Mussolini.

As for Toscanini's repertoire being small, Harvey Sachs, in his biography (1978), lists some 115 operas that Toscanini conducted in the theatre, and orchestral works by 117 composers – and the list is by no means complete. True, he did not conduct Berg, Webern and Schoenberg, but he performed twentieth-century music from Italy, Russia, England and America. In his seventies and eighties he may have preferred his favourite composers (which conductor did not?), but to describe him as playing "a small number of almost exclusively nineteenth-century German classics" is ridiculous. And as for Dr Tanner's comparison between Toscanini ("arch-autocrat . . . martinet . . . strait-jacketed") and Furtwängler ("tirelessly exploratory"), the kind of violent antithesis that admirers of Furtwängler seem strangely drawn to, I deplore that in order to glorify one great conductor he has to vilify the other.

BRIAN VICKERS,
Centre for Renaissance Studies, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zürich.

Melancholy

Sir, – It rejoiced my heart to read in Michael Ignatieff's leading review-article (September 4-11) so deep an anatomy of melancholy: its inevitable but educational part in all our human growth and experience. But there you have it. *Joy* is there too as well as depression; both are poles of that basic dichotomy which is our hard assignment to reconcile, and both have the potentiality for creative dynamism. You can see it in the arts. There can be Mahler's sad *Kindertotenlieder* and there can be Strauss's joyful *Zarathustra*, equally products, if we are thinking on this level, of our innate yearning to leave the narcissistic confinements of infancy and gain some sort of an identity and some sort of a self, in some sort of relationship with outer reality.

It was Winnicott who noticed that an infant will presently find some cuddly object, a doll or a golliwog or even a tatty old rag, and pour affection upon it as a "transitional object" on the way out from total narcissistic absorption towards some awareness that there is also a reality outside. And of course that does not end with infancy. My musical colleague David Burrows has recently come up (*Journal of Musicology*, Winter 1987) with the remarkable insight that we use music, which is acoustics out there but feeling in here, as just a grown-up "transitional object". Behind the sadness and the joy of it alike there lies that unquenchable longing, that "primal insatiable

ity of all human desiring" of which Ignatieff writes, and which he rightly traces beyond all else to the unavoidable, the unacceptable loss of the mother with whom the infant's identification was once so complete and is now so replaceable. But meanwhile, what a comfort music and the other arts can bring to us!

ROBERT DONINGTON,
Firle, Lewes, East Sussex.

Gustav Mahler

Sir, – Christian M. Nebel has drawn your readers' attention (Letters, September 4-11) to his Vienna guide book containing information on Gustav Mahler. The appearance of his volume in 1984 does not alter Austria's official non-recognition of Mahler. Nor is Professor Nebel any better informed than he considers me; I have sent him a list of seven elementary errors in his Mahler chapter.

NORMAN LEBRECHT,
3 Bolton Road, London NW8.

Hopkins's Verse

Sir, – In defending her edition of Hopkins, Catherine Phillips manages to sound both evasive and intemperate (Letters, September 4-11). Perhaps I could clarify the points at issue by asking a number of questions about her editorial policy?

If she prefers Bridges's text of "The Handsome Heart" why didn't she print it in the main text? Previous editors have ignored Hopkins's preference for the version she prints and generations of readers have benefited from their careful editorial wisdom. In substituting an inferior version of the poem is Dr Phillips suggesting that those editors were mistaken in choosing the better version?

Why did she not take full responsibility for the appearance of her text and persuade her publisher to drop the distracting degree signs? Those signs are tolerable in other texts in the Oxford Authors series because poems by, for example, John Clare aren't burdened with the weight of metrical marks which Hopkins's poems carry. It is therefore no argument to the pestered appearance of the texts in the new edition by pushing responsibility on to the Oxford University Press – house editors are generally prepared to allow authors and editors to help design texts if they ask to participate in the production process. Presumably Phillips didn't ask to be consulted about the crucial matter of how Hopkins's texts were to look on the printed page.

Phillips suggests that I am unaware that the unmlaut in the line, "What hours, O what black hours, we have spent" (fourth edition) is in fact a "quiver" or "circumflex". Not so. The unmlaut in the fourth edition is a conventional editorial sign – By sign for Hopkins's manuscript sign –. By dropping the unmlaut, or any sign in that position, Phillips has converted a powerful and unique line of ten syllables into a flimsy line of nine syllables. Why? Does she prefer the cadence of the new nine-syllable line?

The Ulster "ur" sound I detected in "hoirs" is of course no more native to Ulster than is the English language. It is a survival of earlier English pronunciation, which is why I termed it "Shakespearean" and pointed to its Ulsterness. Writing to R.W. Dixon about Dixon's poem *The Story of Eudocia and her Brothers*, Hopkins commented on another Ulster "r" sound:

Arrow on the other hand might here in Ireland become a diphthong, the r before a vowel being not trilled or rolled as in England but burred or "furred" and halflost, so that the sound is like *ah-o* and almost *ow* (they say "the marge and burial of an Orme barster in Merton Square", that is, *the marriage and burial* etc); and nearly this, no doubt, was Chaucer's sound....

Hopkins was clearly interested in regional Irish speech and that is why I suggested that to my ear "black hoirs" spoke for Ulster.

Perhaps Phillips could also explain why she omitted Hopkins's famous "Red" letter to Bridges from her selection of the prose? Gardner prints it in the Penguin *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins* and no account of Hopkins's poetry can ignore it.

In the Penguin edition, and in Gardner and MacKenzie's fourth edition, the first two lines of "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection" are printed like this:

Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows / flout forth, then chevy on an air-built thoroughfare: heaven-roystersers, in gay-gangs / they throng; they glitter in marches.

In the new edition the lines are printed like this:

Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows / flout forth, then chevy on an air-built thoroughfare: heaven-roystersers, in gay-gangs / they throng; they glitter in marches.

In my view the split compound adjective "air-built" reads better than "air-Built" – the freeflowing effect is lost by capitalizing the initial letter of "built". Looking at the notes in the new edition I see no reference to this minor but important change. Is the new version correct?

TOM PAULIN,
Department of English, University of Nottingham.

'Meeting the British'

Sir, – I suppose the word "English" might, with a bit of manoeuvring, be wedged between *ecclasia* and *diplasi*, as is suggested in the *TLS*'s review of Paul Muldoon's *Meeting the British* (September 4-11), but to what purpose I'm not sure. It was another word entirely that Muldoon had recourse to in his poem "The Right Arm", from *Quarf, English, anglicized English*, is an Irish word meaning church, and also the name of the place in which the all-purpose shop in "The Right Arm" is located – hence the bit of word-play in three languages, none of them English.

PATRICIA CRAIG,
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We are sorry for having introduced this mistake in editing Mick Imlah's review.

Spy Fiction

Sir, – It is a pity that to review a study of the spy story as genre (a study which must of necessity be historical) you chose a reviewer as historically ignorant, let alone prejudiced, as Professor John Sutherland. He says (September 11-17) that the spy story "continues to do espionage's PR work for it". How does he fit Ted Albuery into this denunciation? Or Compton Mackenzie? He thinks a nation has only one secret service, whereas most have at least two, if not more. He muddles espionage, counter-espionage, security and – the really dodgy field – counter-subversion, in one mélange of opposition. Like Calvin Coolidge's preacher on Sin, he is "agin it".

He also repeats the old lie about John Buchan's antisemitism: may I direct his attention to the Zionist hero in Buchan's *A Prince of the Captivity*? That is of course if he is prepared to abandon the usual practice of prejudiced intellectuals of using his intellect to defend himself against the need to question the basic assumptions on which his prejudice is based.

The spy story requires a Manichaean world, in which evil may triumph. One can tell a good deal from examining the various representations of the evil power as they have changed over time, in spy stories or in other moralities. But one requires a more sophisticated approach than that adopted by Professor Sutherland. He might try some of Eric Ambler's later novels.

Incidentally Hitler only knew the code-word "Overlord": he did not know where Overlord was to strike, nor any of the other details. Perhaps the worst criticism that can be made of "factional" spy-writing – including that of Peter Wright – is that its own historical ignorance and bias confirms people like John Sutherland in their prejudices.

D. CAMERON WATT,
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'Anti-Calvinists'

Sir, – The theological "goalposts" of the early seventeenth century have rightly come to figure prominently in the recent exchange between Conrad Russell and Kevin Sharpe over the merits of Nicholas Tyacke's *Anti-Calvinists* (Letters, August 21 and 28). I only wonder if one of Sharpe's goalposts marks what he would have it mark.

To be sure, on August 4, 1622, the Direc-

tions on Preaching plainly prohibited sermons on predestination. These royal orders, however, also prohibited sermons against Catholicism, and this last restriction was necessary because, two days earlier, James had ordered the *de facto* toleration of Catholics. These actions, the penultimate steps in an Anglo-Spanish dynastic alliance, produced a domestic controversy unequalled in James's reign. Ministers repeatedly defied the Directions only to find themselves popular martyrs when royal punishment came; popular poets likewise subjected royal policy and advisers to sustained and often vituperative criticism; and James himself felt compelled to refute rumours of his imminent conversion to Rome. Although never formally revoked, the Directions lapsed with the plans for a Spanish match in late 1623, and in subsequent months English churches echoed with sermons against Catholicism and on predestination. Hence it is vital to remember that the goalpost allegedly marking the non-Calvinist nature of the Jacobean Church was only hastily erected in 1622. More importantly, it was consistently ridiculed and eventually pulled down by fans at the ecclesiastical pitch.

Thus the 1622 Directions indeed represented a goalpost, although not the one Sharpe would have. They represented the first royal attempt to challenge the broad-based Calvinist consensus, and the furor in 1622-3 should have warned Charles I what he could expect when he again assailed this consensus in later years.

THOMAS COGSWELL,
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Sir, – Your correspondent Ian Green (Letters, September 4-11) takes issue with me for arguing that Kevin Sharpe, in reviewing Nicholas Tyacke's *Anti-Calvinists*, did not understand what case he was attacking. May I, rather than indulging in a tedious bout of "you did, I didn't", make one further point in illustration of my case? Sharpe alleges that Tyacke believes in a "Calvinist consensus". This is something Dr Tyacke has neither said nor thought, but, by a skilled use of the straw-man technique, his critics use any evidence against this mythical "consensus" as evidence against him. This is why we are treated to the curious spectacle of Tyacke being criticized by the reiteration of points he has himself been the first to make.

Tyacke has not argued that there was a consensus in the Jacobean Church: he has argued that the Calvinists were on top. Since this point was conceded in the writings, published and unpublished, of the Jacobean Arminians, I find it curious that their modern champions claim so much more on their behalf than they were willing to claim for themselves. Perhaps the continuing divisive power of these questions illustrates that we are not dealing with a forgotten theological wrangle, but with a debate between two enduring types of human temperament. That debate, however, would require bigger goalposts than we can ask you to erect in your correspondence columns.

CONRAD RUSSELL,
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Argentina in the 1930s

Sir, – I am puzzled by the reference in Jason Wilson's review of John King's *"Sir"* (September 4-11) to the 1930s in Argentina as "the *década infame* of military coups". There was one military coup during this period, at the very beginning in 1930, that of Uriburu, who soon handed over power to a civilian government, and the country was then ruled by elected governments until well into the following decade. I do not know whether Mr Wilson is thinking of Justo because he was a general, but he became President as a result of an election and not of a coup.

I have never heard the 1930s called "the *década infame*", nor do I see any particular reason why they should be. Jason Wilson may have taken these words from some speech or article, but they are not a term in general use, as one would think from the way he introduces them.

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COMMENTARY

Dreaming dreams without drama

David Nokes

Next: Three films from Northern Ireland
BBC 2

"Remember," the schoolmaster Riley tells his class in *The Rockingham Shoot*, "most of the great playwrights in English are Irish." With scripts from such talented Irish writers as Frank McGuinness, Anne Devlin and John McGahern, and with actors of the calibre of Stephen Rea, Ray McAnally and Bosco Hogan, these three plays from Northern Ireland set high standards. The producer Danny Boyle also set certain limitations of subject-matter, forbidding his chosen authors to deal with military matters or with love-affairs across the sectarian divide. The resulting plays, *Scout*, *The Venus de Milo Instead* and *The Rockingham Shoot* are all dramas of limitation. Instead of the sectarian divide they present the generation gap, each play treating some aspect of the education of the young. But if this was intended as a positive gesture to celebrate the aspirations of a new generation, that hope, like so many hopes in the plays themselves, was misplaced. Despite the youngsters' chirpy wit and cocky charm, the emphasis of the trilogy falls not on the idealism of the young but on the disillusionment of their instructors.

In *Scout* Frank McAnally gives an excellent performance as Palmer, a tough, taciturn talent scout for Manchester United. Dividing the six boys who have come for a trial into two groups, the Catholics and the Protestants, he says, "That is the last time I will mention religion this weekend." But in fact *Scout* is very much a play about religion – the religion of football, Palmer's training camp has all the austerity, both physical and moral, of a Jesuit retreat. The names of famous footballers are intoned like a litany of saints: the boys engage in a ceaseless catechism of footballing facts and figures; at the end the faces of the Busby Babes who died in the Munich air-crash appear on the screen like holy martyrs. Palmer's preoccupations, it becomes clear, are not with ball-con-

trol but with character. The play shows contempt for the notion of football as merely a game. Only once do we actually see the boys kicking a ball and then an incongruous piece of high-speed film interrupts the drama's solemn pace, transforming their careful swerves and passes into knockabout Monkees' routines.

At the heart of this play is the tale of a prodigal son, and it is here that weaknesses appear. The former football star Marshall (Stephen Rea) is presented at first as a menacing figure, prowling around Palmer's hallowed ground like a predator. But when finally he erupts into Palmer's last supper, the promise of dramatic confrontation quickly disappears. The lone wolf is only a lost sheep; the hell-raiser is merely homesick. "What makes a man?" he asks, bleary-eyed, in a maudlin late-night confessional. "His limitations", comes the priest-like reply. Though the tone of reconciliation is well sustained, the patness of such responses gives the play the atmosphere of a homily.

Although well directed by Danny Boyle and Kieran Hickey, all three plays have similar weaknesses. Cast in the form of fables, they score heavily on charm and the episodic enticements of language and locations. Yet in striving to avoid the violent reality of Ulster politics they seem to shy away from all forms of confrontation, opting instead for a set of sentimental myths. Much of Anne Devlin's play *The Venus de Milo Instead* is written and narrated in the breathless, gushy style of a schoolgirl composition. This gives a certain naive freshness to the script, but also produces an unevenness of tone, veering between caricature and confessional. As a comic chronicle of the mishaps of a school-trip to Paris it is a genial if somewhat predictable picaresque, but it has none of the savage humour of William Boyd's recent *Dutch Girl*. Inspired by the *Venus de Milo*, Tracy, the schoolgirl narrator, dreams of an artist's life in Paris. Dressed in antiseptic nylon cup and overalls, she raises her eyes in aesthetic reverie from the rows of chickens in the poultry-packing factory. But the final shot which transforms the sky-light above her into the baroque cloudscape of a Mal-

maison ceiling seems as much ironic as inspirational.

The strongest of the plays, both in theme and presentation is John McGahern's *The Rockingham Shoot*. Concentrating on Riley, a fiercely nationalistic schoolmaster, brilliantly played by Bosco Hogan, it promises an exploration of patterns of independence and deference, language and tradition. When half his class play truant to act as beaters for the English milords, Riley sets the remaining children an arduous Gaelic spelling test. In a beautifully crafted film, the director Kieran Hickey rams home the parallels. Riley barks out the Gaelic syllables like bullets in a voice as harsh and penetrating as the shot-gun fire outside. Next day the beaters are beaten for failing the spelling test. In a scene of hypnotic violence their hands are flayed with a savagery which makes the shooting of pheasants appear a relatively harmless pursuit. Yet, having established a powerful dramatic situation, McGahern allows it to dwindle away in symbolic wistfulness.

Riley's real enemy is not imperialism but romanticism. Filmed in watery tones of blues and greens, and with beautiful moonlit shots of the castle and its lake, the play's atmosphere presents Rockingham Castle less as colonial outpost than as a lost domain of romance. The conclusion, in which the master of words is eclipsed by the master of magic, feels like a deliberate step back into Celtic myth. In dramatic terms it seems unlikely that such a man as Riley would entertain the ragamuffin showman who arrives at his door like a figure from legend. And when he is made to say of this shambling *deus ex machina*, "he reminds me a bit of the country itself", we feel the writer's desire for symbolism undermining his sense of dramatic coherence. The film ends with the children crying out for more magic. Similarly in *Scout* the successful trainee is Turkington, who calls his sleight-of-hand tricks with a silver coin "magic". In all three plays a kind of dramatic sleight-of-hand is at work, producing an effect of sad but cosy make-believe. In place of drama we are offered dreams, and the recreation of a myth of Ireland as a place of frustrated hopes made tolerable by the consolations of fantasy.

In training

Andrew Hislop

Full Metal Jacket
Various cinemas

The Vietnam War was fought in many places other than on its battlefields. The failure, however, of even the mastercraftsmanship of Stanley Kubrick quite to convince us, in his otherwise brilliantly realized *Full Metal Jacket*, that the leaden skies of his English locations cover first a Marine base in Carolina, then an embattled Hue during the Tet Offensive, is no doubt an unintentional reflection of the peculiar dislocation of that extended war.

One of its most decisive displacements was television's bringing of the conflict into every American home. Americans who were not immediately convinced of its immoral folly became confused and disillusioned as the obligatory propaganda of a warring government was increasingly undercut by the transmitted images of the war. More than a decade after its end, it is now repeatedly being fought again in the cinema. *Full Metal Jacket* (loosely based on Gustav Hasford's novel *The Short-Timers*) comes to London shortly after John Irvin's *Hamburger Hill* and Oliver Stone's *Platoon*. Did the long interval between "received" images of the war on the small screen and these composed ones on the big screen (comparable, perhaps, to the gap between the poems and the novels of the First World War) result from the difficulty America has had in coming to terms with defeat?

All three films have been seen as recovering the horrific "reality" of the war, but the similarities between them have been overemphasized because of their contrast with the see-saw mythic extremes of earlier films which bizarrely prepared the ground for the current cinematic catharsis. Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) took America's moral doubt to the very edge by turning its soldiers into "savages", with hearts of darkness, worshipping foreign gods. Sylvester Stallone as Rambo (with some support from Chuck Norris) refought Vietnam so that cartoon American "macho-man" could triumph over history.

Platoon was certainly an antithesis to Rambo, but despite its autobiographical element, Stone ended his film with a duel worthy of a Western, between a scar-faced American bad-die and a young hero. *Hamburger Hill* preferred a more anonymous, mudily naturalistic and mumbly inarticulate representation of the horror and futility of a heroic American "victory". *Full Metal Jacket*, however, overtly questions not just the Vietnam war, or war in general, but the psychological formation of the violence of the American male. It culminates in a brilliantly composed set-piece in which the bull-headed bravado of a Rambo-like figure forces his fellow soldiers into the trap of an enemy woman sniper who, when wounded, is put out of her misery by the central character of the film, Joker (Matthew Modine), a disillusioned reporter for *Stars and Stripes*.

The narrating Joker is one connection with the superficially conventional war-film contrast between harsh training and harsher battle, but the gender of the sniper is an ironic reflection of the psycho-sexual foundation of the Marines' training as killers. This is expressed with full scatological and symbolic force by a drill instructor (an astounding performance by the Vietnam Veteran Lee Ermye) who calls his recruits "ladies", demands that they name their rifles after girls and makes them clutch them in one hand and their genitals in another while singing "This is for fighting, this is for fun". The instructor gets his comeuppance when an obese loser whom he has turned into a pathological killer riddles him with penetrative full-metal-jacket bullets. It is appropriate that the killing takes place in the "head" (lavatory), since the film's picaresc themes are accompanied by a permeating use of the word "shit".

"There's a letter for you," he said, "and there's Swinburne and the *Daily Telegraph*. What order of merit?"

"Oh, *Telegraph* first," said David.
E.F. Benson, *David Blake*, chapter 10.

with an amused smile, much enjoying the situation.
V.L. Whitechurch, *The Canon in Residence*, chapter 1.

2 They were going to play golf once more in half an hour, and David staggered out on to the lawn to lie on the shady terrace-bank for a short spell of Swinburne, which Frank went to fetch from his bedroom. Letters had arrived during lunch, and he found one for himself and one for David, which with Swinburne and the daily paper that would contain one important matter, namely, the result of the county match between Sussex and Surrey, he took out with him.

"There's a letter for you," he said, "and there's Swinburne and the *Daily Telegraph*. What order of merit?"

3 Charles: A good morning – a tremendously good morning – there isn't a cloud in the sky and everything looks newly washed.
Book (turning a page of *The Times*): Edlin's keeping your breakfast hot – you'd better ring.
Charles (Crossing to makepiece and rings bell up stage): Anything interesting in *The Times*?
Book: David has said, Charles has said, Noel Coward, *Billie*, *Sally*, etc.

Platonically pleasing

Lois Potter

MARY PIX
The Innocent Mistress
Derby Playhouse

The 1697 prologue to *The Innocent Mistress* suggests that audiences will be surprised at its cleanness, especially since it's "a Woman's play". The comment was topical, at a time when "reform" of the stage was under discussion. To a twentieth-century eye, however, the prolific Mary Pix seems at first sight not only cleaner but more sexist than her male contemporaries. Though she deals with the familiar 1690s topic of unhappy marriage, she differs from Congreve, Southerne and Vanburgh in laying most of the blame on the wives. This is because she sees women as not the victims but the makers of their fates, whereas the men are mostly a passive lot whose solution to marital difficulties is to run away. Thus Flywife (whose name says it all) has escaped from a shrew only to take up with a clever jilt, Sir Charles Beauclair, trapped between a celibate marriage to a rich and ignorant shrew and a platonic affair with Bellinda, the Innocent Mistress of the title, is finally on the point of leaving the country. Luckily, the two men turn out to be married to the same shrew, a discovery which sets Sir Charles free for Bellinda. Meanwhile, the most sensible woman in the play, after outsmarting her alcoholic rake lover several times, agrees to marry him on condition that he shouldn't "come home surly" after he has been with a mistress.

Three hundred years on, the play's philosophy of marriage still has a certain relevance, but what is more impressive is Mrs Pix's skilful handling of a large cast and their cleverly interwoven affairs, financial and amorous. Familiar plot devices are sketched in at a speed which makes most of her contemporaries look heavy-handed, and familiar types are treated with more good nature than usual. Thus, the most completely satisfying episodes turn out to be those involving the Flywifes (Robert Pickavance and Liz Rothschild) and the double-crossing marriage of the sharper Spendall and the silly heiress Peggy, who (as played by Sifyn Parri and Charlotte Barker) are both more entertaining and more human than their prob-

able models, Young Fashion and Hoyden in *The Relapse*.

Annie Castledine's production has cut out four characters and one entire strand of the plot, as well as doubling masters and servants. Even so, the effect is one of luxurious abundance. To this, the delightful set, with its pond full of live goldfish, its bower, bridges and trick fountain, contributes a good deal, although (or because) the actors seem perpetually in danger of breaking their necks while rushing around it. The music director, Anthea Gomez, has provided a score which, like the costumes and hair styles, blends the seventeenth with the twentieth century. Songs in the Restoration theatre were normally given to professional singers rather than actors (unless, like the original Spendall, they were also known for their voices). At Derby the fact that most of the performers sing or play an instrument is a way of wooing the audience, while guiding it to an appropriate level of emotional involvement.

In particular, the production uses music in a brave attempt to make something of the platonic lovers – the one area in which Mrs Pix's touch falls her. Bellinda has run away from home because her father wanted her to marry a rich man who wasn't at all like the heroes of her favourite romances. The situation cries out either for the satiric treatment which Sheridan later gave Lydia Languish, or for a serious investigation of the fantasizing involved in platonic adultery. Giving Bellinda a cello and Sir Charles a tendency to burst into song partly compensates for the criticism which Mrs Pix herself does not give them. But when the two platonic burst out in the style epitomized by Bellinda's memory of watching "his eyeballs tremble with respectful passion", all the efforts of two intelligent and likeable actors cannot keep one's eyes from wandering to the goldfish.

It is a pity that the production retains two misprints from Fidelis Morgan's edition in her anthology *The Female Wits*, 1981, ("e'er" for "e'er" and "repeat" for "repret"), which also has a maddening policy of leaving out prologues and epilogues. Nevertheless it is thanks to her anthology that the play was produced at the Royal Court's 1985 production of Aphra Behn's play *The Lucky Chance*: it is not often that one book is responsible for so much theatrical pleasure.

Romantically readjusted

Randall Stevenson

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN
The School for Scandal
Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow

The bizarre brilliance with which the Glasgow Citizens' reinterprets classic drama has, in the past, sometimes made the company itself the subject of mild scandal. Compared to some previous productions, their vision of *The School for Scandal* is unexceptionable. Giles Havergal's direction does, however, introduce certain minor emendations to the original.

Some of these are simply matters of tact or economy: the part of Moses the moneylender, for example, disappears, its speeches re-assigned to Rowley, and a few other lines and scenes are cut throughout. Parsimony is taken to rather disappointing extremes in reducing Sir Oliver Surface's memorably satisfied "But he would not sell my picture" – thrice-repeated in the original – to a single line.

Elsewhere, slight changes contribute a particular, sometimes subtle colouring. Late eighteenth-century conflicts of sentiment and romance, developed in the contrast between Joseph and Charles Surface, are especially highlighted: Charles's noble "affection" for Maria, for example, is shown in action in this production at an earlier stage than by Sheridan. This helps to give credence to Charles's affair, by almost immediately showing him so interested in a rather ordinary woman, as well as in wife and song. It also quickly emphasizes the romance (however erratic) of his nature, as well as the profligacy of Joseph Surface, played with dicy elegance by Mark Lawie: is on stage almost from the opening. Long, silent perusal of a notebook during the first scene suggests that he simply memorizes the sentiments he pronounces with unctuous rhetorical emphasis throughout the action which follows. Moments of stress or faltering articulation drive him back to the notebook for assistance: its effectiveness, however, dwindles as his perfidiousness more and more obviously outgrows any repertoire of sentiments or excuses of sensibility he can find for himself.

Other aspects of the production also emphasize a preference for romance, even for speechlessness. Lines from the original epilogue are delivered by Lady Teazle both at the beginning and the end of this production: since this division leaves most of her bitterness for the opening, and her acceptance of her situation for the conclusion, it suggests a slightly more securely comic reconciliation than is offered by the playwright. The happiness of this amended ending is firmly fixed by an additional, wholly wordless last scene in which Sir Peter and a pregnant Lady Teazle exchange smiles and flowers on an ordinary misty morning in their country retreat, presumably safe at last from scandal, sentiment, or even mutual suspicion.

Minor changes and additions of this sort develop Giles Havergal's particular vision of the play, but always in the form of actor's rather than director's theatre. Significantly, one of the best actors on view is actually another of the Citizens' directors, Robert David Macdonald. As Sir Peter Teazle he dominates the stage, reshaping the mood of whole scenes by a gesture of the hand or a change of verbal tone, but there are many other thoroughly enjoyable performances, especially by some finely caricatured scandal-mongers.

COMMENTARY



"A view of the Molo from the Island of San Giorgio", by Gaspar Van Wiere, called Vanvelli (1653-1736), which can be seen in Venice in Perspective: The First Hundred Years of Venetian View Painting at Hnarri and Johns, 12 Duke Street, St James's, London SW1, until October 16.

Psychologically speaking

Katherine Duncan-Jones

SHAKESPEARE
The Taming of the Shrew
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

The programme notes for Jonathan Miller's *Shrew* (his first Royal Shakespeare Company production) are not promising. Peppered with extracts from Elizabethan sermons on wifely obedience and extracts from Lawrence Stone *et al*, on "deprivation syndrome", from which, according to Stone, most men and women of the sixteenth century suffered, they tell us little about the production except that 190 lines have been cut from the text – the Sly Induction and a bit more. I feared that we might be in for a bleakly didactic psychological documentary. Happily, as soon as we come into the theatre it is clear that all is for our delight, as a picturesque troupe of *commedia dell'arte* musicians plays front-stage (the music is by Stephen Oliver). This is a festive, highly entertaining *Shrew* with plenty to please the eye and the ear. It has an ingenious moveable set (by Stefanos Lazaridis), lavish Renaissance costumes (by Martin Chitty) and an abundance of charming detail to fill out the Paduan scene – piles of books, wedding favours, fruit, wine, musical instruments, a Turkey carpet. For a moment I thought we might even be allowed to see Petruchio's spangle, Troilus. Alas, not; but the servants' cries and whistles give a doggy feeling to the stage.

The acting is equally generous, with excellent performances in both major and minor roles. Bruce Alexander's Tranio is astonishingly versatile, and Bianca's two front-running suitors, Lucentio and Hortensio (Alex Jennings and James Fleet) are a pair of engaging upper-class twits, one studently, one military, who are never in danger of upstaging the rugged Petruchio, though just occasionally in danger of becoming a shade boring. However, a wide repertoire of silly walks, silly voices and ingeniously staged business ensure that we never lose interest in the intricacies of the Bianca plot. Bianca herself (Felicity Dean) is suitably bland and selfish, and seems to have an incipient drink problem. Dennis Clinton as the Pedant makes particularly effective use of a cameo role.

So where does deprivation syndrome come in? It is important, I think, as an almost invisible underpinning to Miller's adjustment of Shakespeare's savagely patriarchal fable of wife-taming to the responses of a contemporary, post-feminist, audience. Stone's account of the "psychotic-like attacks of rage" characteristic of emotionally deprived people has evidently helped to define the way the shrew role is played in early scenes. Fiona Shaw's appearance, an alarming blend of Vito Sackville-West and Dr Germaine Greer, with darting, clever eyes, collapsing hair-do and majestic jaw, quickly persuades us that the household life of an untamed as well as unmarried girl is emotionally intolerable for this Katherine, and

her tormented movements and scissor-slashing routines easily persuade us that she is crazed with unhappiness, rather than wicked. She is a misfit in the comfortable household of her affable father Baptista (George Raistrick) not because she is a feminist before her time, but because she has been brutally and apparently irreversibly categorized as "cursed", and therefore undeserving of affection. The attention given her by Petruchio, in the wooing scene, visibly astonishes her, and though it is not clear at what point in the play she has fallen in love with him, it is evident in the last scene that Petruchio and Katherine are firmly bonded in their shared game of one-upmanship over the other married couples. After her wretched hunching and limping in earlier scenes, Fiona Shaw's posture and movements speak vividly of her flowering as a woman and a person. It is clear that the brainwashing Katherine has undergone has left an essential core of intelligence and personality not merely intact, but strengthened. This is a touching, sometimes enigmatic, but always sympathetic performance, which is nourished and enriched by the theory of deprivation syndrome.

Even more remarkable is the sympathetic treatment of Petruchio, played by Brian Cox, still bearing battle honours from *Titus Andronicus*, for those who have seen him at the Swan. Stocky, plain, and rather older than allusions to "young men" in the text suggest, from his first appearance in a sort of Elizabethan cowboy outfit he is magnetic, entertaining and unexpectedly sympathetic. His torturing of his wife clearly costs him much (perhaps his loving murder of his daughter in the other play helped him here), and we are never in danger of mistaking him either for a sadist or for a genuine oaf (unlike Burton in the memorably appalling Zeffirelli film of 1966). This is a subtle, intelligent man, with shreds of a kind of tragic dignity, who is using offishness for a specific and limited purpose. To call that purpose therapeutic would be to overstate the extent to which the psychological reading of the play is made explicit. The purpose is, rather, creative: to fashion a good, and incidentally happy, wife out of apparently unpromising material.

The triumphant success of Miller's accommodation of *The Taming of the Shrew* to modern audience responses was shown in the applause which greeted Fiona Shaw's delivery of Katherine's final speech on wifely obedience.

The British Theatre Association is to present a series of lectures in memory of the writer and critic J. W. Lambert, who died on August 3, 1986. The opening lectures, which will be given in Regent's College, Regent's Park, London NW1, will include Michael Meyer on Ibsen and the Theatre of Today (October 7), Dame Peggy Ashcroft in conversation with Irving Wardle on Fifty Years of British Theatre (October 14), and Alan Ayckbourn on Playwriting – a Craft Industry (October 21). Future lectures will be given by Terry Hands, Frederic Raphael and Jeanne Moreau.

Conspiring with the conventions

Duncan Wu

STEPHEN BILL
Curtains
Hampstead Theatre

It is Ida's birthday, and her daughters, Katherine and Margaret, have come with their husbands, Geoffrey and Doug, for the yearly celebration. Now eighty-six, Ida is senile and confined to a wheelchair. Despite the atmosphere of routine, this year's party is different: Susan, Ida's youngest daughter, whom she has not seen for twenty-five years, returns home, and, later that evening, Katherine fulfils a promise she made to her mother years before – to help her die.

The strategy of Stephen Bill's fine play, realized by an excellent cast under Stuart Burge's direction, is to penetrate our more superficial attitudes and responses by juxtaposing comedy with pathos. Michael (Philip Bird), Katherine's son, jokes about his grandmother's senility ("Sometimes she thinks she's in the House of Lords"), and her decrepitude ("She's nearly all plastic"). But even as he invokes the familiar comic stereotypes, Ida's torment reveals their purpose – to shield us from the horrors of old age. "Is it True Leith?" Katherine asks of the trifle that Margaret (Sheila Ballantine) has made for her mother. "Same recipe as last year, I'm afraid", she replies. At that moment Ida has a coughing fit and brings up blood.

This queuing unease intensifies with the arrival of Susan (Gillian Hanna). Like Margaret (who lives in Hampton-in-Arden, shops at "Marks and Sparks", and watches *Antiques Roadshow*), she is lightly satirized – she lives in a Shepton Mallet squat with her two children called Cloud and Ratin. But she is also the only person to make contact with her mother, when Ida smells the roses she has given her.

The clash of comedy and tragedy is more

than a device to shake up the audience – the paradox that an act of devotion can also be one of violence is integral to the play's theme. This is exemplified when Katherine helps her mother to die. Bridget Turner's compelling performance moves the audience first to awkward laughter with her fumbling attempts to fill Ida's mouth with pills, and then to horrified silence as she smothers her with a cushion. If one is reminded of Othello's murder of Desdemona, it is only by way of contrast: Ida's death is messy, squalid and embarrassing.

"Murder, mystery, suspense, and dream topping on your trifle", Doug (Alfred Lynch) comments at one point. *Curtains* may flirt with the conventions of thrillers and soap-operas,

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 347
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than October 9. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date. The solution and results will appear on October 16.

1 Tranter Reuben, Mary Borden, Brian Howard and Harold Acton.

2 Herder, Wieland, Lessing, Bosquet, Montaigne, etc.

3 Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen, Margaret and Rosalyn.

Competition No 348
Winner: John Gero
Answer:

1. "You are candid – very candid," said the clergyman slowly. For a minute or two he smoked in silence and with distracted brows. He was accustomed to have things thrust upon him: it was unlike the speeches of laymen at church conferences and opinions expressed in the correspondence of the *Guardian*. The other watched him

In the land of acquisition

Harold Beaver

H. G. WELLS
The Future in America: A search after realities
 194pp. 0948214082
 HENRY JAMES
The American Scene
 335pp. 0948214104
 Granville. £10.95 (paperback, £5.95) each.

The Future in America (1906) and *The American Scene* (1907) were published by Chapman and Hall in a uniform edition. However various in style and treatment, they are curiously matched: the one by an Englishman, the other by an American; the one projected mainly on to the future, the other mainly on to the past; the one by a greenhorn, the other by a longtime and diffident absentee; the one subtitled *A search after realities*, the other whose title (pace Hardy) might well have been *The Return of the Native*. Both principally cover the East Coast, though Wells makes a foray west as far as Chicago, and a second (projected) volume by James would have extended his survey "to the Pacific coast and back".

Wells was still writing *The Future in America* while reading instalments of his friend's work-in-progress in the magazines. He was not, he recorded beligerently, "a retrospective American, but a go-ahead Englishman". James acknowledged a gift copy in his usual dazzling and circuitous style, intruding hints amid the compliments of Wells's "sublime and heroic cheek", until rounding on him abruptly with: "I think you, frankly, - or think the whole thing - too loud, as if the country shouted at you, hurrying past, every hint it had to give and you yelled back your comment on it", then adding:

but also, frankly, I think the right and the only way to utter many of the things you are delivered of is to yell them - it's a yelling country, and the voice must pierce or dominate; and my semitones, in your splendid clashing of the cymbals (and theirs) will never be heard.

Of course James's semitones and demi-semi-tones have been heard, but only intermittently by a small and exacting band of devotees. *The American Scene* remains, as W. H. Auden observed in 1946, the "most ambitious and best" of his topographical writings. Edmund Wilson called it "one of the best books about modern America". Leon Edel wrote in 1968 of its "exuberance of observation", "depth of historical feeling" and "personal involvement". But then Edel annotated and introduced his reprint. What is one to make, then, of these two new and uniform "editions" from the Angel Bookshop, Islington? They are tacitly reset and printed, that is all. No introduction. No notes. No errors corrected. No indication of the provenance or date of cover photographs. Just an unsigned "Note on the Text" and page-headings readjusted or omitted to fit the new pagination. That seems a poor piece of publishing. Both Wells and James, eighty years on, deserve better. As does "DMR" (Dorothy M. Richardson), the dedicatee of the English edition of *The Future in America*, casually identified as "a novelist with whom Wells had a brief affair in 1906".

True, quite other affairs were preoccupying America at the time of Wells's visit. It was Maxim Gorky who was eagerly awaited and his common law wife who aroused the moral revulsion of the press. The question that so flustered Wells on the immigration form ("Are you a Polygamist?") was not specifically aimed at him. So we find him calmly lunching at Delmonico's when the news of the San Francisco earthquake broke. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* had just been published. He was to meet everyone from Abraham Cahan in New York to President Eliot at Harvard and Jane Addams at Hull House in Chicago. In Washington he even received a summons to the White House. For the President, it turned out, had read *The Time Machine* and confronted its author with all the dogged optimism of his age:

"Suppose, after all," he said slowly, "that should prove to be right, and it all ends in your butterflies and morlocks. That doesn't matter now. The effort's real. It's worth going on with. It's worth it. It's worth it - even then."

It is with Teddy Roosevelt's "friendly peering snarl" of a face - "like a man with the sun in his eyes" - that Wells leaves us.

For progress was his theme. His was to be a socio-economic analysis of the Progressive Era, treating America itself as a kind of "time machine" for a prophetic exercise. He was amazed at the lavish, inexhaustible-seeming scale of the wealth, of the crowds jostling across Brooklyn Bridge, of the immigrants passing through Ellis Island. More and more immigrants. Taller and taller skyscrapers. New York he called "not simply more interesting than Rome, but more significant, more stimulating, and far more beautiful". The griggish museum-culture of Boston merely bored him. But he was simultaneously appalled by the industrial sprawl at Niagara, the stench of the Chicago stock-yards, the reek of Standard Oil, the army of child-labourers in fields and factories and mines. Paterson, New Jersey, he declared, was "more slovenly than any European town west of Russia, and as hopeless".

Wells was particularly attracted by the paral-



A detail from a picture, by an unknown photographer, of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island at the turn of the century, reproduced from the cover of *The American Scene* reviewed here.

lels between the American and the Roman republics, by "the steady development of an exploiting and devastating plutocracy, leading perhaps to Caesarism". America, above all, he concluded, needed to be "democratized". In this sense he was at one with Ignatius Donnelly's *Caesar's Column* (1890) and Jack London's forthcoming *The Iron Heel* (1908). But Wells was peculiarly Edward Bellamy's heir. As Bellamy looked backward (in the year 2000 AD) from a benevolent, co-operative, totalitarian state, so Wells was peering forward from the Victorian nightmare of Chicago to the fruits of Fabian Socialism: "And then, perhaps, these world-poisoning abattoirs will come under public control, and clean marble and pure water and well-washed hands replace the rotten, blood-soaked wood and mud and squalid rush of the present régime." He had read Steffens's *Shame of the Cities*, Lawson's *Frenzied Finance* and Tarbell's *Story of Standard Oil*. He was as shocked by the "magnificent irresponsibility" of the rich as by that "mischievous and violent lady anarchist", Emma Goldman. America, he believed, was still "an intensely moral land" in which all lusts were curbed bar one, the lust of acquisition. That alone was glorified.

What really upset him, though, was mass immigration. He was affronted by the ringed Jews, the Slavs, the Roman Catholics, the Asians, the "foreign peasants". He was scared of this "dilution" of British stock by Eastern riff-raff. What is salutary to note is how firmly, again and again, he was challenged and clearly put in his place. For a confessed futurist, he got things decidedly wrong:

I believe that if things go on as they are going the great mass of them will remain a very low lower class - will remain largely illiterate, industrialized peasants. They are decent-minded peasant people, orderly industrious people, rather dirty in their

habits, and with a low standard of life. . . . One sees the possibility of a rich industrial and mercantile aristocracy of Western European origin, dominating a darker-haired, darker-eyed, uneducated proletariat from Central and Eastern Europe.

Of blacks Wells had even odder ideas. Compared to Jews and Armenians, he thought them "more Occidental": "more genial, more careless, more sympathetic, franker, less intellectual, less acquisitive, less wary and restrained". Many were not really "black" at all, he argued, but of mixed blood, often descended "from the first families of England".

Just think of the sublime absurdity, therefore, of the ban. There are gentlemen of education and refinement, qualified lawyers and doctors whose ancestors assisted in the Norman Conquest, and they dare not enter a car marked "WHITE" and intrude upon the dignity of the rising loan-monger from Estonia.

In this racist myth, therefore, blacks might be declared honorary Westerners, but Jews remained for ever oriental. With such antisemitic

rather, who had skipped some twenty years of his country's growth. Now sixty-one, he preferred to expunge almost all autobiographical elements, travelling incognito under such elusive personae as "the ancient contemplative person", "the restless analyst", "the expatriated observer", "the non-resident", "the shuddering pilgrim", "the brooding visitor", "the student of manners", "the restored absentee". So there is much he omits. Almost all personal contacts are ignored. He does not say that he was in New Jersey as a guest of his publisher (where "poor dear old Mark Twain" was a fellow guest); nor that in New England he was staying at his brother William's summer place (where he proof-read *The Golden Bowl*); nor that he several times visited his youngest brother Robertson in Concord, Massachusetts; nor that he visited the Yiddish theatre, on New York's lower East Side, in the company of the playwright Jacob Gordin; nor that in Philadelphia he called on Sarah Wister (daughter of Fanny Kemble and mother of Owen Wister, who later was to show him round Charleston); nor that he was the guest of Isabella Stewart Gardner in her Venetian palazzo on the Fenway in Boston; nor that in Washington he stayed with Henry Adams; nor that he was dined at Teddy Roosevelt's own table at a White House reception. Nor does he mention his lectures (on "The Lesson of Balzac") which took him from the Bryn Mawr commencement to Baltimore, from Smith College, Northampton, to the Sanders Theater at Harvard, to Amherst.

All this was blanked out, though obviously the return to family and friends proved euphoric. From Lenox, in Massachusetts, while staying with Edith Wharton, he wrote to his publisher:

I am moved inwardly to believe that I shall be able not only to write the best book (of social and pictorial and, as it were, human observation) ever devoted to this country, but one of the best - or why "drag in" one of, why not say frankly the Best? - ever devoted to any country at all.

That suggests the surging ambition of the task; and *The American Scene* is an absorbing, visionary work, altogether in a different class from his European travelogues (*English Hours*, *Italian Hours*, *A Little Tour in France*). But if it is prophetic, it is so in quite a different sense from Wells's forecasting. For Wells, New York was a thing of beauty, outstripping Rome. For James, it was "the terrible town". Those "multitudinous skyscrapers" he saw as "extraneous pins in a cushion already over-planted"; the famous skyline, as a "broken hair-comb turned up". He bewailed the impermanence, the waste, the "immense promiscuity", the ultimate vacancy of it all. "Vacancy" is his key refrain: the apparent void of the new rich, of Cape Cod, of Florida, of the whole South; and the heroic effort of gouging "an interest out of the vacancy". It is a prime example of what Savran Bercoitch has called the American Jeremiad, with its apocalyptic warning of "a society dancing, all consciously, on the thin crust of a volcano".

His pose, though, is purely aesthetic. It is a Pateresque presence, like a filament, gem-like with intensity, no longer illuminating Old World charms but curiously abandoned in the New. James vibrates with curiosity; he surrenders to his impressions; he discriminates ceaselessly between various notes and (their anagram) tones. He embodies Emerson's prophetic dictum: "I am become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all." He sees. He reflects. He reads what New Jersey or Richmond or Washington might "connote". The result is a distinctly flighty style in which skyscrapers are transformed to pincushions, the Capitol to an "estate-office" (where a motherly Columbia is fenced round with rocking-chairs), Florida palms to so many rows of dishevelled and puzzled philosophers, and commuters on the Hudson ferry to gold and delicious apples. His reflections, he records, "fairly hummed . . . in the manner of bees about a flower-bed, and burying their noses as deep in the corollae of the subject".

The style verges on camp, especially as "the restless analyst" is everywhere so anxious for "the amusement of interest", for pictorial "value", as if the whole of America were a stage-set for his entertainment. The business of America, of course, was business. "Stop lively!" was the incessant watchword in New

York. But James deliberately dawdled along with the critical and contemplative values of the leisurely aesthete footloose, not in Rome or Naples, but in Boston or Baltimore. It is a self-conscious paradox, this delicate *flânerie* in a land where only women (except in Washington) talked and where everyone (except in Washington) was in "business". In Independence Hall, in Philadelphia, he even immodestly imagined some eighteenth-century lady crying: "What an admirable place for a declaration of something! What could one dare - what couldn't one really declare? And then, after a moment: 'I say, why not our Independence?'"

That sort of thing was not likely to go down well; and usually James steered clear of political history. He acts, rather, as a seismograph, seismologist of culture, reading and registering all the signals of the landscape. Watch him on Cape Cod:

The man was a little boy in tight knickerbockers, the bane barely an animal at all, a mere ambling spirit in tune on the scale of a hairpin, the buggy dismounted save for its wheels, the whole thing the barest skeleton of the road, of the void: circumstances, together, that struck the note, the right, the persistent one - that of my baffled endeavour, while in the neighbourhood, to catch life in the fact, and of my then having to recognize it as present without facts, or with only the few (the little white houses, the feathery elms, the band of ocean blue, the stripe of sandy yellow, the tufted pines in angular silhouette, the cranberry-swamps strung across, for the picking, like the ruled pages of ledgers), that fell, inconspicuously silent, into the picture.

The effort is all in this communion with a seemingly barren landscape. Occasionally, as here, we are privileged to see his driver, or porter, or boy-guide (in Salem), or a handsome young farmer (in the Confederate Museum in Richmond). Occasionally we may overhear commercial travellers or American girls chattering in the Pullmans. In Florida a "lone breakfasting child" engages all James's studious attention: "the little pale, carnivorous, coffee-drinking ogre or ogress who prowls down in advance of its elders, engages a table-dread vision - and has the 'run' of the bill of fare". But usually he communes only with urban or rural landscape: streets, buildings, monuments, even country clubs. He operates, as it were, where verbal and architectural composition meet, amid a constant hubbub of dialogue. Now James addresses a building; now the buildings address James as well as each other. The signals fly. James sends out his "lasso of observation" from "verandahs of contemplation".

What he mainly contemplated was wealth and frenetic desecration by that wealth. He bemoaned the urban "blight" (James's word) that had ruined Boston and New York. Gone were his boyhood home on Fourteenth Street and birthplace at 21 Washington Place (just off Washington Square, next to the original building of New York University). Nostalgically he pined for the pure Newport days when it was the haunt of the happy few who sacrificed "openly to the ivory idol whose name is leisure". For "production takes time" and the production of interest "takes most time": that was the desperate truth. "And in America there was no history, nor credible possibility in time for history. Nothing was consecrated for anything but the commercial. All structures were extemporary, their mission merely 'to glid the temporary, with its gold'".

That, above everything, is what James overheard: the "huge American rattle of gold". As he put it with searing force:

To make so much money that you won't, that you don't mind anything that is absolutely, I think, the main American formula. These things for money - or so little that it passes their for money - and being thereby distinctly reduced to mindless, amends to your being reduced to the knowledge that America is no place for you.

At its exact midpoint *The American Scene* became for James a kind of *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, since America, he concluded, was both for the very rich and for the very poor. The frustrated American was he who

makes too little for the castle and yet "minds" too much for the huddled herd, who can neither achieve such detachment nor surrender to such society; and who, of all accordingly, in the native order, fails of a working basis. The native, the peculiar native, Europe, it sensibly less, but less on the other hand, the American, that makes necessary, whether he knows it or not, the very thing that he does not know of below.

Alan Brinkley

PAUL BUHLE
Marxism in the United States: Remapping the history of the American left
 299pp. Verso. £24.95 (paperback, £8.95).
 0860918483

Paul Buhle calls this account of the frequent trials and infrequent triumphs of American Marxism a "family history of the left". The "family" it describes includes a part of the author's own generation (Buhle was a graduate student in history in the 1960s) and, as he makes clear, the author himself. Once a New Left activist, Buhle is now - like many radicals of his generation - an academic, to whom Marxism is a largely intellectual and cultural commitment. In tracing the development of American Marxism, he is telling the story of a small, close-knit intellectual community whose internal life has only rarely and tangentially affected the larger culture in which it resides but of which it is not fully a part.

The story of American Marxism, as Buhle tells it, has moved through four distinct phases in the course of the past century. It began in the late nineteenth century as the property of European immigrants, to whom radical politics became largely a refuge from the powerful industrial society they had suddenly entered. Buhle is "astonished", he writes, that historians have so often viewed immigrant communities as conservative. In fact, he claims, they were rife with radical ideas and with creative radical thinkers. Socialist newspapers were often the most popular periodicals in immigrant neighbourhoods. Socialist activists were often the most influential politicians.

In the end, however, immigrant socialism was unable to take root securely in late nineteenth-century America, despite the social and economic turmoil that made the 1890s "the richest moment of political opportunity in the nineteenth century". Conventional explanations for this failure have focused on the socialists' deliberate exclusivity; most immigrant socialists spoke no English and made no effort to penetrate native culture. Buhle, however, offers a slightly different analysis. The socialists were doomed, he argues, by their ideological "fundamentalism", their unwillingness to adapt European Marxist ideas to American realities: to the "diverse labor force", the "deep republican traditions", the "overpowering bourgeoisie", and the "sporadically restive masses" who "would not yield to a literal class solution". For radicalism to flourish in America, it would need to rest on "something more complex, and something deeper in the American grain".

It did so, for a time, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, which Buhle considers a golden age of the American left. This was the point at which radicalism came closest to establishing a real foothold in American political culture. The collapse of the most vibrant non-Marxist insurgencies of the late nineteenth century - the Knights of Labour and the populists - paved the way for the emergence of a genuinely American socialist movement, which displayed significant strength in both rural and urban areas and managed to elect numerous candidates to state and local offices. The Socialist Party had a humane and popular leader, Eugene V. Debs, and a strong institutional base. In 1912, it attracted 6 per cent of the popular vote in the presidential election - its best showing ever.

In the end, however, this native socialism proved no more able to establish a permanent base in American political life than the immigrant radicalism that preceded it. And like the European-born radicals, the American-born founders, Buhle claims, on their own cultural and intellectual limitations. The English-language socialist movement "never quite transcended its origins as a voice of protest for the petty bourgeoisie beaten down by industrialization". Nor did it ever confront its own racism and sexism, which prevented it from recruiting constituencies crucial to its cause. By 1920, socialism had largely collapsed as a political movement. Never again was it to have any significant grass-roots constituency.

The next important moment in the history of American Marxism was, of course, the 1930s. The Great Depression helped the tiny Amer-

ican Communist Party (by now separate from and hostile to the American Socialist Party and firmly allied with the Soviet Union) move out of isolation and establish significant footholds in labour unions, black communities and the intellectual world. At its height, according to most estimates, the Communist Party had about 100,000 members; but its influence extended well beyond its official membership. Communists were for a time so visible and so apparently influential that it became fashionable to refer to the 1930s as the "Red Decade".

Yet once again, according to Buhle, the left's own obtuseness doomed it to failure. The Communist Party's Leninist fundamentalism made it unable to speak "to the deeper radical impulses" latent in American culture. The Party's very successes in the 1930s should have taught it what it would have to do to flourish in the United States; it would have to adapt to the "polycentric quality" of American society. But "the lack of Party democracy" (and, although Buhle does not directly say so, the Party's subordination to Moscow) "prevented the real lessons learned at the base from transforming the upper echelons".

Even before the futility of the Communist Party became evident, many American Marxists had already begun to adapt to what would become their most enduring and perhaps most important role. As early as the 1920s, some radicals were using Marxism not, principally, as the basis for a political challenge to American society but as the foundation of a distinctive cultural stance. And that essentially cultural radicalism became steadily more important in leftist circles and formed the foundation of the post-Second World War radical community, which now spans three generations. Marxism became in the world of arts and letters what it was never able to become in the world of politics and economics: a powerful force for challenging old norms and suggesting new paradigms.

The famous *Parisian Review*, the creation of the most influential young Marxist intellectuals of the 1940s, was from the beginning concerned almost entirely with literary and cultural questions, leaving politics to the increasingly peripheral *New Masses*. Gradually, the "Parisian Review crowd" moved away from radicalism - many of them so far away that today they number among the most important neo-conservatives. But the use of Marxism for cultural rather than political purposes continued to dominate American radicalism through the 1950s and even the 1960s.

The New Left did, it is true, have a highly publicized political agenda and spearheaded some of the most visible and disruptive radical political action of the twentieth century. But those political efforts were, Buhle suggests, ultimately of secondary importance to cultural efforts. The principal legacy of the New Left, he argues, was the expansion and strengthening of a radical "community", bound by shared experiences and shared assumptions, and committed above all to an intellectual Marxism.

This is not, Buhle insists, evidence of failure. On the contrary, the modern left has provided its adherents with an invaluable "gift". It has opened their eyes to new possibilities of human freedom and fulfillment, to a vision of "individuality, the expansion of individual personality". That gift has far greater possibilities for producing radical social change than the orthodox political philosophies of the older left. Already, he argues, the culture of "individualism" has begun to move beyond the radicalism - community into the lives of the larger culture - not through the creation of cadres or vanguards or party structures, but through its penetration of mass culture. Television, film and popular music are not simply vehicles for transmitting a banal and co-opting "consumer culture", as many have argued; by absorbing and transmitting some of the messages of radical culture, they demonstrate their potential as instruments of liberation. Perhaps we should not be surprised, then, that he describes modern Marxism as "something scarcely recognizable to older generations of American Marxists, something closer to the young Marx or the middle-aged Bruce Springsteen than to the Second or Third Internationals".

There is much in this book that is thoughtful and intelligent. Buhle subjects American Marxism to analysis and self-criticism largely free from the sectarian camp that dominated

many such exercises, and he raises many challenging questions for those concerned with the history of the left. But it is not, in the end, a successful book. It suffers in part from its very wide scope, which has forced the author to breeze through complicated political and intellectual questions with distressing superficiality. It suffers still more from its often impenetrable, jargon-laden prose. ("Spiritualism offered the framework for a super-organicism, an American version of left-Hegelianism with its theism intact.") But it suffers most of all from its almost entirely internal approach to the history of the American left.

The book rests on the premise that Marxism has had an important life of its own in America quite apart from whatever impact it has had on the larger culture, that it has formed the basis of a small but important subculture which, despite its many ups and downs, has survived for generations. But even the most vibrant and self-contained subculture does not exist in a vacuum. The left may have had only limited effects on the mainstream of American life, but that mainstream has clearly had significant effects on it. Yet no one reading this book would suspect from its contents that the fortunes of the left were ever much affected by anything but the radical community's own intellectual strengths and weaknesses. When the left triumphed, Buhle suggests, it was because of the energy and wisdom of its members; when it failed, it was because of their shortsightedness, their inability to tap the "radical impulses" that he seems never to doubt run deep in American culture.

It is, to say the least, curious to read a history of American radicalism that makes virtually no mention of the extraordinary assaults the left has endured from powerful institutions and communities throughout its history: the intimidation of immigrant workers by employers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the unprecedented official and popular persecution of socialists and other radicals (real and imagined) during and immediately after the First World War, the intense anti-communism of the 1940s and 50s (generally known as McCarthyism), and the revival of anti-radicalism in the late 1960s and 70s. Even more curious is to read an analysis of the American Communist Party in which Stalin, the Comintern and the Nazi-Soviet Pact are ignored or discussed only in passing. And Buhle's tribute to mass culture as a potentially subversive vehicle seems largely wishful: a much stronger case could be made that popular culture has responded to the left largely by co-opting and domesticating its messages, presenting them in ways generally unthreatening to mainstream values and assumptions.

Buhle does not, clearly, believe that the American left has existed outside of history. But the history that concerns him is something almost invisible, a process of deep change that has made older radical assumptions unworkable and has not yet produced appropriate new ones. "The apparent impasse in our present era," he writes, "is surely the result of a meta-historical process which has taken place behind the backs of the left (as well as everyone else)." In the face of such obstacles, American radicals must content themselves with their "undying revolutionary faith" and with their effort to "keep a light in the window". What that means, apparently, is that the left will reside for the moment primarily in and around academia, that radicalism will remain an almost entirely intellectual and cultural commitment. In America, at least, Marxism has reverted to what it was in the beginning: a pursuit confined to the modern equivalent of the British Museum reading-room.

The fourth edition of M. J. C. Vile's introductory text *Politics in the USA* (292pp. Hutchinson. £8.95. 0 09 151571 8), originally published in 1970, begins with the Constitution and the federalist solution and ends with a brief chapter on the 1980s. In succinct sections Vile discusses parties and elections, delineates governmental structures and their interactions, and deals with concepts like political extremism, the role of personality and grassroots democracy; occasional case-studies, such as that of the Congressional deadlock over the Civil Rights Bill of 1966, illustrate general points.

1401100 116

Ego indestructible

Clancy Sigal

JEROME WEIDMAN
Praying for Rain: An autobiography
422pp. Bodley Head/Reinhardt, £15.
0 370 310829

Jerome Weidman's novel about the New York garment trade, *I Can Get It For You Wholesale*, became an international best seller when Weidman was barely out of his teens. But already the Jewish boy from the lower East Side tenements was an accomplished writer whose short stories had been published in the *New Yorker* alongside those of John O'Hara. "Childless, untrained, and self-conscious, I put the stories down on paper the way I had learned to walk", he explains in *Praying for Rain*, his first attempt at autobiography following thirty-nine other books (including twenty-two novels). Like George Gershwin, the actors John Garfield and Paul Muni and a whole constellation of self-taught children of Jewish immigrants who came bursting out of New York's ghetto in the 1930s Depression, Weidman quickly achieved success on raw talent alone. Unfortunately, in the rambling, amiable musings contained here there is little evidence of the innate ability and power which prompted Ernest Hemingway to call Weidman the American Balzac.

"Why... does the author suddenly begin to feel the urge to exhumate his true image?" Weidman, now seventy-four, asks himself and us. But he provides no answer in *Praying for Rain*. Perhaps he put the best of himself into his essentially autobiographical sequences of novels *The Harry Hagen Story* and *The Benny Krume Sequence*, or in to his early short stories,

Tottering Utopias

Christopher Hitchens

FRANCES FITZGERALD
Cities on a Hill
414pp. Picador, Paperback, £4.50,
0 330 29843

With this collection (and, it might be added, her contribution to the Carnegie symposium *Estrangement* in 1985) Frances FitzGerald lays claim to the title of America's finest essayist. She can write humanely about politics, polemically about civil society, informatively about foreign affairs and sceptically about ideology. She is well read and travelled. She makes no special effort either to conceal or to advertise her prejudices, which are those of a fastidious liberal.

Cities on a Hill is a connected set of meditations and reports from four different types of "community": the homosexual world of San Francisco, the fundamentalist enclave of Lynchburg, Virginia, the retirement town of Sun City, Florida, and the Bhagwan Rajneesh commune in Antelope, Oregon. All four in different ways are shown to exhibit the persistence of American Utopianism.

That Utopianism is of a peculiar and resistant sort. By and large, Americans refuse to believe that humanity or society can be ameliorated by collective or political action. But they cannot do without the belief in amelioration, which is accordingly manifested in so many versions of "personal growth" and "individual fulfilment". This supplies the energy and daring of the Utopian enterprise, and also commonly condemns it to defeat or disappointment. Each of the four experiments that we encounter in these pages proves to be hollow upon careful scrutiny. I should say that that is my opinion and not FitzGerald's. She resists the presumably innumerable opportunities to make fun or to pass judgment. This does not mean that she is indifferent; more that she uses her own curiosity to enlighten the reader.

By now, everybody knows about the "Castro clone" - the distinctly coiffed and attired gay person. Everybody has read of Jerry Falwell's true believers with their desperate refutations of Darwin, and most people know about the "giving of America" and the word influence exerted by the less ascetic variety of Indian

ies, which include the brilliant and moving "My Father Sits in the Dark" and "The Horse That Could Whistle Dixie". On this evidence, one is tempted to dismiss Weidman as a literary shooting star who fell to earth after completing, almost in a single burst of energy, his first series of lyrical, angry, evocations of New York Jewish ambition. Better than any sociologist he explained in his novels how a shittet people from East European villages made the transformation to the forcing-house of Manhattan poverty and thence to success. That is, he describes those who were successful. He hardly mentions those who were not. It is almost as if fear of failure had been his motivation, his main reward the distance he was able to put between himself and those who lost.

He is good with anecdote. Lillian Hellman ("she always looked reassuring in the kitchen"), Dashiell Hammett (to whom Weidman was brutally frank about the older man's decline), Somerset Maugham and armies of New York publishers, agents and friends troop through his slow-paced pages, dropping useful quotes, filling out the book. But there is almost nothing about how or why Weidman wrote, where he found his material, how he shaped it. Just success, success, success, with dutiful, offhand tributes to his mother, who never recovered from her disillusionment with America (Weidman glosses over this) and to his father, who must have been an extraordinary man - a penniless sweatshop tailor, Weidman Senior had been the organizer of an underground railway for runaway Nazi refugees, probably saving scores of lives. The frustrated reader longs to know more about them, as also about the author's wife of forty-three years, but is given nothing more than Weidman's indestructible ego.

guru. Whether by accident or design, FitzGerald happened on all four of these groups as they were entering a period of crisis and uncertainty. The Castro district of San Francisco has been enervated by AIDS, the fundamentalist universe has been warped and battered by its ungainly overlap with politics and money, the aged will be the first to feel the effects of recession, and the ochre-clad devotees have seen their ashrams become impure and all too much of this world.

These varying pursuits of happiness are analysed and described with humour and care. I had never before read of the San Francisco ceremony to welcome back the two gay hostages of the 1985 Beirut hijacking. The men had feared detection by their Shi'ite puritan captors, but had been taken for macho because of their "olive drab fatigue trousers and tank-top shirts". This story is told with a matter-of-factness that enhances its amusement. So is the tale of a speculator who purchased land next to the Sun City "retirement community" and threatened to turn it into a cemetery until he was handsomely bought out. Jerry Falwell's lucubrations about Armageddon are fairly and faithfully set down, with a touching description of the difficulties faced by his few missionaries in New York City. Only the votaries of the Bhagwan come off badly, and that is because their commune went into its final self-destructive talkpin while FitzGerald was actually there.

In a final chapter that makes the best use of her historical scope and learning, she inquires into the febrile ephemerality and the stubborn recurrence of such self-centred and exclusive movements. These pages suggest that there is "no basic agreement on the nature of the culture", and thus that the wilder and stranger aspects of American pluralism will be reproducing themselves for the indefinite future.

Cities on a Hill is one of the very few books to give shape and tone to the so far inchoate picture of the 1980s in America, a period in which public decline and private celebration have been unusually observable and conspicuously connected.

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Casting a cold eye

Rosemary Dinnage

MARY MCCARTHY
How I Grew
278pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £14.95.
0 297 791702

In *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*, published in 1957, Mary McCarthy told the story which is the background to this volume of autobiography - how she and her three brothers were early left orphans by the 1918 flu epidemic, how they were adopted by a punitive couple of Catholic relatives, how she alone eventually "escaped" to the more benign regime of her Protestant grandparents. The Protestant/Catholic mixture was compounded by the fact that her grandmother was by birth Jewish.

"About truth", she says in *How I Grew*, "I have always been monotheistic. It has been an article of faith with me, going back to college days, that there is a truth and it is knowable." The terrible transformation of a happy to an unhappy childhood has made her obsessive about recreating her own life's truth: as a child stunned and unquestioning, she has since (with her brothers) spent much time in pursuit of what happened, how it happened, all the details of when and where and who. Her method in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* of getting at the one actual truth was to collect her pieces about her childhood (written for the *New Yorker* and entirely in its style) and follow each one with an examination of how literally exact it was. It gave that book an advantage over this one, not only because it concentrated on the dramatic events of a childhood rather than on intellectual development, but because the *New Yorker* chapters were enjoyably literary and formed.

In *How I Grew* Mary McCarthy does not separate out literature and comment, but deliberately plays with memory as she goes along. The writing is studded with phrases like "Stop! That cannot be true..." and "I was nearly forgetting that...". It is something between free association and the interminable reminiscence of Grumpy in her rocking-chair (extremely sharp-witted Grumpy). For it does at times seem interminable; whole cavalcades of schoolfellows and teachers are resurrected in their exact appearance; college curricula are rehearsed; paragraphs like this abound:

The Aldriches, who were related to John J. Chapman and "Sheriff Bob" Chanler (the one that married Lina Cavalieri and got the famous "WHO'S LOONY NOW" cable from his brother Archie, who changed his name to Challoner and was doing time in a madhouse for shooting his butler), dear souls, were land-poor and practiced the strictest economy at Rokeby, their Hudson River property, where Mrs Aldrich (known as "the American Florence Nightingale" and "the Angel of Porto Rico" in the Spanish-American War) distributed home-made pen-wipers for Christmas.

Neurosis made popular

James Wood

JAY LANDESMAN
Rebel Without Applause
286pp. Bloomsbury, £12.95
0 7475 00353

Editor, lyricist, satirist and early promoter of Lenny Bruce and Woody Allen, Jay Landesman is a capable, if tiresomely compulsive humorist. At the centre of recent American bohemianism (the milieu of Kerouac and Ginsberg, the mild excesses of the 1960s), Landesman clearly has a story to tell. A ploy then that his prose, at once gauche and insistent, should be such a poor ally of autobiography.

Brought up in New York and St. Louis, Landesman spent his early life in the family antiques business before founding, in the late 1940s, a magazine called *Neurotica*, "for and about neurotics, written by neurotics... the neurotic's answer to the *Parisian Review*". As an attempt to popularize neurosis (and the links between it and art) it became something like a cross between *Popular Psychology* and a medical journal. During its short life it published Marshall McLuhan and Allen Ginsberg, then still struggling for literary recognition. Before it died in 1961 it had a peak circulation

It is not enough that a railway of the 1920s is evoked in all its detail - linen table-napkins, special receptacle for hair combs, hot showers, shoe-shining porters: the author has also pored over maps with a magnifying glass to determine exactly where the defunct line ran. Sometimes the period detail does fascinate: the rides in the electric motor car, tea dances at the Masonic Temple in ribbed silk stockings, the posting of coupons for free samples of freckle cream and bust developer. But sometimes sheer enumeration palls. For a history of intellectual growth, more is needed than lists of books read and courses studied; in fact the account of the loss of Catholic faith in *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* was more illuminating. And in a curious way the passion for recording detail is counterbalanced by a lack of emotion. McCarthy describes several tentative teenage suicide attempts, but does not speak much of anger and pain. In musing over her adult feelings about the vicious aunt and uncle she says:

I do not think I have tried to avenge myself on them in what I have written... If I triumph over them now, still again, recalling details of their regimes, it is because the tale of it makes me smile. Perhaps that is Nature's re-pur: over the years I have found means - laughter - of turning pain into pleasure... They have been immortalized, which is to say that Uncle Myers and his pedometer have been condemned to eternal derision.

It is certainly a cold eye that she casts back on her youth, an eye detached from the derisive smile. She is somewhat aware of this. Laughter is an antidote for self-pity, she says, "yet probably it does tend to dry one's feelings out a little, as if by exposing them to a vigorous wind... There is no dampness in my emotions, and some moisture, I think, is needed to produce the deeper, the tragic, notes".

We gather rather than feel that she was what would now be called a disturbed adolescent. The cruelty she suffered made her a pathological liar, she says (all the more reason for her to be fanatical about recovering the truth). She was ashamed of her one-quarter Jewishness and, confusingly, found Irishness was considered low-class when she went to college. Grabbing at affection, she was seduced at fourteen in the back of a car, and brutally dropped. At eighteen she met her future first husband, an actor nine years older than herself, and during their engagement was treated by him equally brutally. The book ends with her wedding night, when she was twenty-one.

As we climbed into the big bed, I knew too late, that I had done the wrong thing. To marry a man without loving him, which was what I had just done, not really perceiving it, was a wicked action, I saw. Still with remorse and terror, I lay under the thin blanket through a good part of the night; as far as I could tell from what seemed a measureless distance, my untroubled mate was sleeping.

of about 7,000, but it seems to have reflected its editor's wearisome, slightly adolescent eccentricity: proser articles included "The Castration Complex in Animals" and "Art as Catharsis: The Laxative Theory".

After *Neurotica* Landesman and his wife Fran went on to produce a musical, *The Nervous Set*, which reached Broadway, and to found a club in St. Louis called The Crystal Palace, where performers included Woody Allen, Phyllis Diller, Lenny Bruce and Barbara Streisand.

Landesman may well be praised for "starting it all", as Norman Mailer puts it, but his description of it is disappointing and the thrust to his story tends to slip between the gaps in his threadbare prose. Without the wordplay and intelligence of an S. J. Perelman or a Woody Allen, Landesman merely apes that particularly American brand of neurotic self-exposure and theatricalized failure. Nevertheless, there is pleasure to be had from following him through his manic New York of poets, punks and pastrami sandwiches; or from following the fortunes of friends like Stanley Radutovich, driven by artistic failure to near-suicide; "he checked out the size of the gas oven door, and finding that it fitted his head, gave it a couple of tries without any luck. He claimed he was too depressed to turn on the gas".

50 by DOUGLAS DUNN

Delayed by southern possessiveness,
The summer's agents turn up late
With their sorries, their more-or-less
Sincere apologies, light-weight
Jokes, ubiquitous assistants
Performing aerial events,
Wavers of avian cradles where
Abyre or gable tucks the air
Under its eaves. "What kept you, friends?"
Bovarian asparagus,
Burgundian grapes and other godsend,
The usual Hispanic fuss,
Devonian nativities
Beginning in the apple trees.
The glass farms of the Netherlands
Commanded sun and tied our hands.
At least, you've come. Our bad selves, dulled
By winter and frustrated spring,
Drained good from us, and poured a cold
Malevolence over everything."

II

We tend our earthen restaurants.
Buying our portions of the south;
Strange languages visit our tongues,
Saying "I love you", mouth to mouth.
Erotic gardens promise fruit
Nurtured from an ancestral root.
A smile, and the clematis flowers.
A few weeks more, and south is ours!
Yachts multiply; pods flex
Deserved and succulent harvests.
Lawnmowers, shirt-sleeves, open necks...
Young girls ring daisies round their wrists.
Mrs Belle Gillsand's parrot squawks
For liberty beyond her clock's
North-facing mantelpiece - humdrum,
Tick-tocking tropic martyrdom.
Deep in coniferous woods, the dry
Needle blankets shift, claw and squall
Shaded by wing-beats, then a shy
Creatively panic and paw-fall.

A continuing journey

Michael Parker

NEIL CORCORAN
Seamus Heaney
192pp. Faber, Paperback, £3.95.
0 571 139553
BAROLD BLOOM (Editor)
Seamus Heaney
199pp. New Haven: Chelsea House.
0 8754 7025

Given his reputation, popularity and frequent appearances in new poetry anthologies, it is somewhat surprising that so few books have yet appeared on the work of Seamus Heaney. Although his work is characterized by great immediacy and accessibility of language and feeling, it is not without its difficulties. The dynamics of his poetry springs from a continuing tension between origins and education, his formative experiences as an Irish Catholic and his "exposure" to the secular, sceptical and brutal adult world, and one looks to the critic to illuminate those areas of the Heaney paradox with which we are least familiar.

By skillfully combining his own insights with those derived from interviews, reviews and articles by Heaney - many of which are little known - Neil Corcoran in *Seamus Heaney* provides a more detailed picture of the life and the work than we have had hitherto. His book is well written and displays deep feeling for and understanding of his subject, and the inclusion of material drawn from his conversations with Heaney in July 1985 adds to the book's authority and informativeness. We learn much more of the making of the poet, and the intensely Catholic ethos which shaped and continues to shape his identity; of the security and unity of

III

Eat fern seed, walk invisible.
Summer is fragrant, this far north.
By night, on Inverdoval's hill,
Visit the gods of wood and fir
By paths of inner wanderlust
Here on the summer's Pictish Coast
Where half-forgotten festivals
Quicken the half-remembering pulse.
Watch starlight struggle in an oak's
Irradiated rafters, hear
A minstrelsy from lunar hammocks
Sing love songs to the hemisphere.
Moonbathe, be moonstruck, watch a birch
Assume serenity and search
For its perfection, northern
On its grass sofa, turf and moon-fern
Delighted where a foot-snapped twig
Startles symphonic foliage
And mushrooms tremble on their log,
Stellar on an eternal ridge.

IV

The heart stays out all night. Each house,
A variant on moonlit slates
And flightpaths of the flittermouse,
Sleeps in the dream it illustrates
Translating garden laureates
Into unlettered alphabets.
Holding antiquity and now
Within the same nocturnal vow -
Internal wonders in that pale
Hour after sunset when you hear
A visionary nightingale
Articulate your life's frontier.
An owl perched on a chimneypot
Too-woos its legendary thought
Across the estuary of dream
Along the light-buoy's punctual beam.
Stars in the trees, moon on a headstone,
Night's footprints on the riddled earth;
The wind's herbaceous undertone,
Moon-puddled water, mystic Firth...

his Mossbawn home, presided over by its trinity of mother, father and Aunt Mary, the latter "a kind of second mother, really" - "a golden world", as Edna Longley called it, forever "lost" when Heaney won his scholarship to St. Columba's, Derry, and when the family moved north-east to Bellaghy, of his growing awareness of sectarian division during his teenage years; of the period spent "floundering" in his post-graduation days, before the impetus and confidence derived from his reading of the Irish poets Patrick Kavanagh and John Montague, and from his friendships with Michael Mac Lavery, Philip Hobsbaum and, most importantly, Marie Devlin, the eventual Mrs Heaney.

One might argue, however, that a fuller account of the period at St. Columba's would have been valuable, since it provided the initial taste of exile; and key lessons in the benevolence and brutality of authority: it was there that Heaney cut his critical teeth and became intrigued by the creative processes of Hopkins and Wordsworth, who fostered in him a sense and the poet's vocation. Given the widespread ignorance of recent Irish history and politics in Britain, and the fact that this is a "student" guide, it is a pity, too, that Corcoran's book does not give more weight to the political context of Heaney's writing. The author does refer to Heaney's participation in the Civil Rights Movement, but fails to specify what that participation entailed. The reader needs to form a clearer picture of the injustices which stimulated opposition to Unionist hegemony in Ulster in the late 1960s, and the terrible progression of the crisis.

Rightly, Corcoran stresses Heaney's mobility, his "uncompromising refusal to stay still, to rest in any fixed position", and charts for the

V

Planhouses force Italian heat
On melon, pepper, peach and vine
And horticultural conceit
Perfects a Scottish aubergine.
Imagination manufactures
A vitreous continent, nature's
Geography turned inside out
On the botanic roundabout.
By fraudulent, glass-roofed lagoons
Gardeners ply the trowel and hoe
On Polynesian afternoons
Of the oriole and the papingo.
Waterfalls slacken, their cold threads
Dribbling on shrunken riverbeds.
There's trouble at the reservoir:
At night it launders one pale star.
Dry pelts diminish on the road,
Each beast its dehydrated shroud;
A butterfly's life-episode
Withers in daylong adulthood.

VI

Postponed by seasonal delight
And midnight sun, the north returns.
A furred, Icelandic anchorite
Travelling south by landmark cairns,
Islands, headlands, bearing his cold
Autumnal charms, spelling ridged gold
Into the shiver in the leaf.
Deciduous, wrinkled and skew-wiff,
Rumoured by clouds and sudden chills,
By falls of apple, plum and pear.
Arched, orphaned cats on windowsills
And by botanic disrepair -
Look to your blessings and your coat,
Gloves for your hands, a scarf for your throat.
Your gardens, yielding pod by pod,
Surrender to another god.
Go home; chop wood. North-easterns strain
Over the sea. Farewell. This line -
Greybreaking, late September rain -
Falls heavy, cold and argentine.

the poet will have to be standing with Oisín against Patrick.

The editor's note to the volume *Seamus Heaney in the Modern Critical Views* series claims that the book contains a "representative selection of the best criticism so far". Certainly the pieces by D. E. S. Maxwell, Terence Brown, P. R. King, Anthony Thwaite, Blake Morrison, Carland Green and Helen Vendler are illuminating and impressive, but I would have preferred to see a few more Irish names. Seamus Deane and Edna Longley for example. Maxwell's "Heaney's Poetic Landscape" and Brown's "A Northern Voice" effectively explore the paradox of Heaney's imaginative possession of and dispossession from his home ground, and the fusion of religious, erotic and linguistic imagery in his startling evocations of sacred landscape and sacred figures. In "The Feminine Principle in Seamus Heaney's Poetry", Green identifies the different incarnations of the "Earth Mother" in his first four books, though her case would have been strengthened had she connected Heaney's awe for that deity with his upbringing and the Marian emphasis in Catholicism.

The essays by Rita Zoutenberg and Jay Parini are the least satisfactory in style: the former repeatedly reduces poems to simple statements "about" this or that, while the latter's sensitive analysis is frequently marred by a weakness apparent in some of Heaney's earliest poems, "an overplus of image-making" (does Heaney have to have "laser-beam focus" vision, which sears "indelibly... the reader's mind"? If one "dives in bogland", does history "peel away like the layers of an onion" as "one falls through shelves of civilizations"? But this book, like Corcoran's, is a valuable addition to the body of criticism of Heaney.

I think I am a Christian because the Sermon on the Mount galvanizes so much in me that clings conspicuously and unconsciously for apperception. But I have no doubt that I am also a pagan, and that every poet is.

Delvings and tramlings

Jane O'Grady

SYLVIA KANTARIS
The Tenth Muse
64pp. Ilclston: Menhir. Paperback, £4.50.
0907654037
Time and Motion
76pp. Ilclston: Menhir. Paperback, £3.95.
0907654045
DINAH LIVINGSTONE
Savory Grace: New and selected poems
1967-87
53pp. Hungerford: Rivelin Grapheme.
Paperback, £4.95.
0947612262
GILLIAN ALLNUTT
Beginning the Avocado
63pp. Virago. Paperback, £3.50.
0866888321
HELEN DUNMORE
The Sea Skater
72pp. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe.
Paperback, £4.50.
1852340667

In "Poets and Poetesses", Sylvia Kantaris speaks of women "tapping / their own veins for inspiration" and leaping down shafts of jangled cupboards, landing underneath the kitchen garden "in a chaos of roots and nervous systems". Though it also contains the external, seasonal observation she attributes to male poets, her poetry is most idiosyncratic when delving into the interior and subterranean. "Gorgon" describes a woman who has undertaken the prescribed avoidance of sun and emotion in order to preserve her looks, but

behind whose "moonface" and Mona Lisa smile fathomless years are hidden, and something coils and feeds, "casing its long slack through hidden shafts" to stare out through her eyes and stir the roots of her hair. Undefined writhings in cerebral and abdominal tunnels occur frequently in Kantaris's poems: though sinister, they also indicate hidden layers of life. She is concerned, not with the skull beneath the skin, but with the living viscera beneath both. A pregnant woman is cocooned around the life she nourishes; theories or dreams "worm" in the brain; writing poems or love letters, like studying, constitutes the most rarefied perversion - dabbling in the "damp, / voluptuous linings of minds exposed / for disembodied intercourse"; love affairs are tunnelled, sublimated, sometimes misread, into telephone calls, letters and dreams.

For Kantaris, poems are often "delicate perversions", though she also speaks of poetry as "polarized sex", which is nearer to Dinah Livingstone's vision. With none of Kantaris's secure subterranean continuities, Livingstone's vein-tapping opens up a terrified amorphousness, and in many of her poems the "I" or "she" that she often makes herself has to "collect what I am / from the muddle and mess". Her poems insist on poetry's integrating power, both as a means of communication (her skills as a performance-poet bear this out) and as sharply satisfying mastery of the inchoate; and she excels at precise delineation of the disintegration which makes her crave this. In "Housewife", the "I" occurs in fragments (head, eyes, foot, body), which is how she seems to perceive and function, and everything outside her, though also broken, dissociated

and in the wrong place - a tiger eating the washing, a broken shard in the dirty kitchen, "sweaty butter" on the floor, a dead baby in the dustbin - blends and swells nightmarishly. Only from having made tea does she infer that she exists; in Livingstone's poetry such a deduction is frequently necessary, due to bodily disconnectedness, whether that of waking up with "unsafe fuzzy head", ringing with noisy passions, or, in the "bloody succession / of negative and positive", being unable to remember "the feel of the feeling of pleasure" until "joy slips in again / like a guerrilla unit / in a nocturnal takeover". Another of the emotions which invades her is rage: not the Californian sort plausibly supposed to clear the air, but something rank, unhealthy and uncomfortable, alienating her from others - who are reduced to smirking gyrators in another dimension, "noise far away".

The struggle between control and chaos is always ambiguous because her "sensible shoes" self can become sterile, and the intrusion of passion or inspiration fruitfully disruptive. Her poetry also gains depth from the tension between intellectual and physical passions, conflicting desires for social commitment and creative solitude, and from her religious and political preoccupations - though the latter sometimes didactically obtrude. She is also good on the trampling of conventions, living with "movable feasts" and scepticism. Unfortunately much of Livingstone's excellent earlier poetry has been sacrificed to her more recent poems in this selection, which is ridiculously slight for such an original and accomplished poet.

In "Arran, Summer 1981", Gillian Allnutt

speaks of collecting "stones or words / to weight the light / sheaf of papers / I call / body and soul", and, elsewhere, of making a poem "for a mind that can no longer think in words". Preoccupations analogous to those of Livingstone, whose success with "chaos caught and harnessed" Allnutt lacks. Sometimes the sparse stoniness of Allnutt's internal and external landscapes, and her way of jumping from one association to another, is effective, as in "convent", "Alien" and "Riding Home", and in some of the poems about a friend whose "death left the door of the world wide open". Images tend to be impenetrably personal; and Allnutt's method of punctuating and serrating poems, with spaces in the middle of lines, makes them look, as well as feel, fragmented into cryptic collages. Her more fully fleshed poems are the most satisfying.

Helen Dunmore's poetry mostly avoids the subject of herself. In her earlier collection, *Apple Fall*, which was more concerned with the personal or social, she seemed surer of her own voice; here the descriptions of landscapes, or of people viewed from far away, as in *Lowry* paintings, imply a solitary watcher, yet screen her out. Though intended, like Edward Thomas's, to glance off the physical and obliquely capture an abstract insight, her poems often fail even as descriptions - the reader has a sense of "so what?", or wonders what was being described. The word-pictures of historical and mythical characters are more interesting. Three, which describe the enigmatic Donna Juanita in her dewy garden, an updated, adolescent Rapunzel, and the archetypal protective mother Thetis, achieve a sharp blend of the sensuous and the intellectual.

Acute angles

In a brief *ars poetica* which concludes his latest collection, *Homing* (52pp. Secker & Warburg. Paperback, £5.95. 0 436 28041 8), John Mole imagines "An undressed language, / A simple purpose / Like the child's tyrannical / *Me! Me! Me!*" - only swiftly to undercut this ideal: "But that little fawn / Is of deprivation, / A stone, a cloud / Or a flower, autonomotus . . .". Fascinated by innocence and innocent angles of vision, Mole's poetry can also accommodate a darker, more adult world. In his best work poet and child participate in a dance of disquieted complicity. *Homing* has its share of such work.

Mole is at his most straightforward when he re-invents the landscape of childhood. Although ghosts stalk through "Finnings", their world is reassuringly impervious to adult unease: "Whose are those feathery tears that keep coming? / Somebody weeps without a sound / And leaves his grief heaped up on the ground." It's only snow. However, when *Homing* leaves behind this kingdom of muffled, perpetually immature wisdoms, problems can arise. Poems about corrupted innocence grow shrill behind the mask of social conscience. In "Last Night" inner-city rioters are glibly pigeon-holed as "grown children". Equally knowing are the volume's MacNeice-like exercises in parable such as "Every Little Mouse" and "Toy Bricks".

Elsewhere adult and child meet on more equal ground. "Adder" invokes a childhood already unnervingly vulnerable to grown-up experience: "Victory V, / Black V for venom, / Churchill's long cigar, / The hiss of Hitler . . .". This leads to a comic yet uneasy fusing of man and boy: "Herr Leviathan, / The Poisonous One . . . / In my dream, inside / A Chilprufe sleeping suit, / I killed him nightly / With bare hands." Stanzaic, yet structured round units of line and phrase, the poem's language pivots on a sophisticated simplicity. Several other poems use war as a catalyst for the mixing of innocence and guilt. The most intriguing of these - "Coming Home" - describes how a young soldier is haunted by his murder of "a child that couldn't run away". The poet's own peaceful domesticity is nightmarishly implicated: "And that's the reason why this can't go on, / And why it's almost culpable to write, / And why I can't stop thinking of our son / And of how easily we sleep at night . . .". The lambics cress the tortured emotion with eerie smoothness. This is a poetry unwilling to trust finalities; least of all its own. D. V. Horne

Cornish nasties

John Melmoth

JANICE ELLIOTT
The Sadness of Witches
102pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £10.95.
030416572

Like a thaumaturgic Militant Tendency, the "witches" have infiltrated the covens; sisters in witchery are coming out. Contemptuous of amateurs and their "crazy orgies", they are anxious to dissociate themselves from the gothick paraphernalia, the wax effigies, pins and potions of sorcery.

Janice Elliott in her new novel, however, will not allow the modishly *bien pensant* to be lulled into a false sense of security. Witches are as capricious and spiteful as ever they were, ready in the gratuitous exercise of their power to pluck a child from a swing, send a storm to down sailors, blind a rival or suck a man's soul from his body. Beauties, frumps, slags and gannies, they are camouflaged, not compromised, by their cigarettes, central heating and jobs.

Molly and Walter Waterman, late of the Earthfolk, soft and disillusioned ecologists, migrate *en famille* to a Cornish coastguard cottage in "dark" Poltresh. Once settled, Molly worries and copes with her appalling grown-up children, Walter's lame ducks and with her grandson, Walter, all the while, is busy being his inimitable self; "sadness and simplicity" are written across "the features of a carved saint somewhere between Sebastian and Francis".

Still standing

Anne Haverty

EMMA TENNANT
The House of Hospitality
184pp. Viking. £10.95.
0670815012

Novelists tend to stake out a milieu, a perspective on life, a style, and stick to it throughout their careers. You can generally identify a novel by Iris Murdoch, Margaret Drabble or Graham Greene from the first page or two. But it is more difficult to tell one by Emma Tennant because she takes such gleeful pleasure in her versatility. Last year, in *The Adventures of Robina*, she abandoned the school of magic realism for a *jeu d'esprit* about the rollicking, degenerate aristocracy of the 1950s in the style of Defoe's *Roxana*. Now, in *The House of Hospitality*, she stays with the stately homes of England of that period but writes in a dense, mannered style very akin to that of Anthony Powell.

The fascination of the noble houses of England for the middle classes has been a fruitful subject for novels since those houses began to seem anachronistic. Emma Tennant uses the bewilderment of a middle-class schoolgirl who penetrates the walls of the great pile of Lovegrove to suggest that, while life within the walls is not very well, it goes on and will go on through its instinct for survival and exclusiveness.

Amy, the daughter of Lovegrove, is adored by everyone, pupils and teachers alike, at the middle-class day-school in West London which she (rather improbably) attends. This may not be entirely due to snobbery. Amy is beautiful, fair-haired, pale, long-legged like a thoroughbred; while the other girls, notably Candida Tarn who adores Amy to the point of obsession, are dumpy by comparison and inclined to go different shades of red in bourgeois discomfiture. Jenny lives in the grimy Portobello Road with her homely Labour Party aunt, and it is she, the narrator, not Candida, who goes to Lovegrove when Candida contracts eructation-pox. Jenny, avidly observant and erudite, but otherwise colourless, witnesses the goings-on at Lovegrove. Readers of Powell and Evelyn Waugh will not find these particularly strange.

There is the usual weekend assembly of people of uncertain marital status, disreputable habits, a painter or two, a retailer called Bolton, Lady Lovecombe, Amy's mother, is a cold, cold, unbending, Lord Lovecombe's randiness in a cabuncular way and is

In fact, the only evidence of his saintliness is his absolute lack of a sense of responsibility and the tenacity with which he lets things go.

Nevertheless, "everyone loved Walter" and his particular style of soporific proves irresistible to Martha Price, the lonely and sexy witch of neighbouring Poltresh, who ensorcells him as a prelude to jumping his bones. Between Bel-tane and All Hallows (spring and autumn to "civilians") these two vivid and forceful women contend with deep seriousness and some danger for the affections of this moping, middle-aged hippie. In spite of its fundamental incomprehensibility, the clash proves instructive for both women. Molly bucks her ideas up to the point at which she can recognize Walter as "the most profoundly selfish man I know". Martha learns that there are limits beyond which she will not exercise her powers and that the fulfilment of desires can entail irksome responsibilities; she becomes, in short, more human.

The consistent problem is that the constituent elements of *The Sadness of Witches* (like those of the same author's *Magic*) relate to each other only in fits and starts. One might attempt to gloss over this on the grounds that this is a story about love, fascination and responsibility (good and evil, at a pinch) and that the supernatural element is peripheral. But this would be to fail to take proper account of the book's callous high spirits and the fact that the usually urbane Elliott is betrayed by dark forces into lapses of tone: "on the moors above something wild barked." Her account of "witchpower" itself is ambivalent. On the one

hand, there are the Dionysian "call to chaos", "gossip served hot by cold hearts" and "spite and mean tricks"; on the other, the more or less trite attempts to equate it with womanhood, to justify the claim that "there is a witch in every woman. No man could understand how close women are to the earth, the tides, the moon, to nature."

The invocation of the spirit of place is similarly baffling. According to Elliott, Cornwall is variously "dream country", "a mumble of myths", "tenuously linked to England". Martha's topography is more dramatic still: "This is a terrible place - Don't be misled by all that Flurry Dance stuff. The Celts are still strong here and they are a violent people. Incest. Rape." Yet Elliott peoples it with the

Back to shiftwork

Valentine Cunningham

ERICA JONG
Serenissima: A novel of Venice
225pp. Bantam. £10.95.
0593113654

Erica Jong craves the advantages and braves the risk of seeing double. Her current formula for literary duplication came good in *Fanny*, with its spy conjugations between eighteenth-century erotica and the figurations of more current fantasies. *Serenissima* deftly replays the hand, this time coupling a Venice of today with a city offered as the Venice of Shakespeare's youth.

Film-star Jessica Pruitt is in Venice as a Film Festival jury-person. Her mind, though, is frequently off the dire Festival entries and on William Shakespeare, her girlhood reading companion. Jury service over, she hopes to do a version of *The Merchant with Björn Persson*, the sober Swede whose latest offering is howled off the screen during the festivities. Almost as soon as we meet her she's wondering whether her favourite bard ever dropped in on her favourite city during his notorious last years. Could it be that he came there with the Earl of Southampton? Could he even, speculation drives relentlessly on, have picked up his Shylock materials first hand in the Venice ghetto? And, small surprise only, our Jessica is soon bundling through a historical warp there to do time as Jessica, daughter of Shylock bedding and boarding with Shakespeare and Southampton amidst a proteptic Niagara of quotations from plays the lad from Stratford hasn't quite got around to penning yet.

The nature of Venice itself, Ms Pruitt keeps on alleging, sanctions all such doublethink. Venice is where literary timetravellers traditionally go for cultural transgression, labyrinthine transactions and narcissistic posturings in a world of dubious reflections and subtle mirror-images. Do not the canals themselves compose a veritable labyrinth of worrying reflexive surfaces? No wonder, it's implied, that the cineastes and *paparazzi*, autograph books quivering and flashguns blazing at every Pruitt move, should find Venice so much to their taste. No wonder, either, we're urged to believe, that here our heroine should find herself turning into a Dark Lady fit for a Bard, that Hollywood's Jessica should also star as Shakespeare, or that a Swedish film director should be found sporting the mask of the proprietor of a great house whose name happens to be enigmatisable as Belmont.

This is a novel full of masks, actors, costumes, performances. Persons and personae converge, intersect, get confused, at every turn, on and off stage, in public and private, in brothels, at balls, in the here and now, back then. And Erica Jong works her doubling very hard. Most writers would find their hands full enough with the fakery of the cinema. She offers costume dramas, ventriloquial *toots de force*, the naming of names and the naming of parts, in two widely separated generations.

Among the chief pleasures of Jong's work is that her command of the words, the names, the quotes, is sustained at such a stratospheric level. She's always got the word for it. But this high score in the naming game does have its irksome aspects. The habit of continuously dropping brand names and the names of the glitterati: Shakespeare's constant *misfires* and last words pulled from a vast array of text-

usual considerate, eco-conscious middle classes and harmless old dears who would not have been out of place in North Oxford, the setting for her last novel, *Dr Gruher's Daughter*. Against such prosaicism the Devil himself would contend in vain.

Janice Elliott is one of the most consistently interesting of British novelists, continuing, with that elusive facsimile of effortlessness, to produce polished work out of her special blend of whimsy and tough-mindedness. Do not be fooled, however, by all those accommodating wives and mothers, all the knitting, novels and television, long walks, adult sexuality and civilized conversation. Beneath the pellucid surface of the narrative something nasty and frustrated continues to move and mutter.

ual hats still to be: all this can't help sounding a bit too pleased with its own knowingsness, social dexterity, literary aptness. Too smart, you might say, for its own good. And not least when it comes to naming all the names, uttering all the words, in those numerous passages that seem to arouse Jong's prose most - from the soft corn porn dressing-up routines with Jessica's underwear, to the hard naunch when Southampton, Shakespeare and a tart tricked out as a boy are inventively playing beads with several hags. "Fie on it! Was Will Shakespeare good in bed?" our heroine enquires. Coarsening moments like that only bring home the nagging unlikelihood at the heart of Jessica's main double act as the essence of Hollywood leading lady who's also creatively critical and a feminist.

That said, Erica Jong's whippy trans-historical shuttle both dazzles and amuses. What's more, her delving into life in the Venetian ghetto of Elizabethan times is both moving and arresting, and her access to the plight of a heroine approaching middle age in a male-directed celluloid world where the starlets must never droop or wrinkle is a shinningly serious subtext always threatening to command the tale.

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Going public

Tim Dooley

IAN MCMILLAN
Selected Poems
89pp. Manchester: Carcanet. Paperback, £3.95.
0856157189

A poet who lets his publisher claim that his ambition "is to be a stand-up comic" is already offering some hostages to fortune. Ian McMillan is best known for his work with the mobile writing workshop, Versewagon, and the performance group, Circus of Poets. The passionate belief in communication attested to by these activities combines in McMillan with a defensive modesty about the claims writers can make for themselves. This collision is the source of much of his comedy - as in "Sessions", a sequence cataloguing the disasters that can befall a "writer-in-schools", the embarrassment and absurdity that can ensue when an essentially introspective art is asked to go public. In section three of "Sessions" Mr McEnri is asked to perform alongside Mr Thrust, a badger-carrying taxidermist:

He's going to stuff it
in lessons three and four
for a group of slow learners
in a temporary classroom

and we thought that
as he stuffed it
you could improvise a poem
like the troubadours used to.

If this is reminiscent of Roy Fisher's "Paraphrases", it is worth noting how much further McMillan is willing to go along the road of manic exuberance. Fisher is possibly an influence on other of McMillan's poems. The two poets are certainly alike in their aesthetic reverence for the ordinary or ignored, for the processes of labour and their surroundings.

It is almost nine o'clock. The women are taking their children down to school. They pass a man who is reembling, controllably with a big machine. As they walk white smoke begins to climb from a chimney, and the sun holds itself out from behind a cloud onto Keppel's Column, tall on a rise behind the half-built streets.

McMillan's *Selected Poems* includes about half the poems from his two previous Carcanet

collections together with nearly thirty poems written since. Several of the newer poems refer to the miners' strike of 1984, the best of them making their points by discreet and tangential ironies in a manner reminiscent of Eastern European poetry. "Tall in the Saddle", for example, seems at first to be another of McMillan's comic excursions to the Wild West like "The Texas Swing Boys' Dadast Manifesto", and it is only gradually that one realises that one of the most powerful photographic images of the strike - a picture of a baton-wielding mounted policeman seemingly about to hit a young woman - is being recalled. These poems speak tellingly of new moods in "streets

Deadpan marvels

William Scammell

PETER DIDSBURY
The Classical Farm
80pp. Bloodaxe. Paperback, £4.95.
1852240121

The first poem in Peter Didsbury's stimulating second book, "A Priest in the Sabbath Dawn Addresses His Somnolent Mistress", gives one a good idea of the playful themes that he likes to engage with. The priest could be Laurence Sterne (with whom the poet identifies a few pages on: "I am inventing a Dag, / which will accommodate everything") talking to his girlfriend, or an English Oblomov attempting to summon up some energy and self-discipline, or Didsbury himself addressing his muse. "Wake up, my heart, get out of bed / and put your scarlet shirt back on and leave: / for Sunday is coming down the chimney / with its feet in little socks, / and I need space in which to write my sermon", for "the faithful have set their feet upon the road / and are hurrying here with claims on the kind of story / which I cannot fittingly make from your sudden grin". But make it he does, or at least Didsbury does, in his "Aerial songs, estuarial poetry" which use Hull as a *point de départ* for the godhead, or "The Globe", or the sub-station of the electricity generating board, or wherever. The influences here are distinctly European. References to Reverdy and Desnos confirm the interest in surrealism already apparent in his first book: *The Butchers of Italy*. Add to this a

/ you know like the back of your house". A train edging into a frozen tunnel suddenly meets "the end of resistance" and rushes into darkness

like a van
speeding from a
fenced-in printworks,
like a fenced-in bus
speeding from a pit.

Standing up to be counted, or standing up to raise a laugh, can leave a poet vulnerable to shifts of fashion, but McMillan's best poems - "Frosted" or "Pushing, May 1984", for example - develop a very individual sense of mystery that it is hard to imagine vanishing quickly.

classicizing bent ("All will come by wisdom on this spacious classical farm. . . my factory of ash for fattening small landscapes"), and a quizzical way of defamiliarizing provincial England, and you have the flavour of a typical Didsbury poem, which settles none the less for a stoic quietism rather than subversion or romance.

The technique is to write in deadpan, prosaic lines, planting his images in a wide-eyed syntax redolent of Alice or Ovid reporting one marvel after another. This is fine so long as literary knowingness doesn't break in in strenuous allusions and word-games, or the shop-talk scattered around in poems about poems.

He will have to beware of these "unstable munitions", for they can sound merely cute or squib-like. "I'm exhausting my karma of a country parson / In a dozen lives of wit and kidneys, / caritas, the pox, and mangled endpapers", says the Sternel poem: "A Winter's Fancy", and it ends: "Light me that candle, oh my clever hand, / for it is late, and I am admirably tired." Every poet commits poems like that from time to time, in order to keep the ink flowing. In his pen, but it's questionable whether they should ever be gathered between covers. I prefer those poems which risk a little, such as "The Hallstone", which has a bad attack of reflexivity: half-way through but recovers its lyric nerve by the end. Didsbury's brand of humour and pathos can be immensely attractive. I remember, once, I brushed against my sea-boots in the dark, and after I'd frightened myself I inquired with growing joy / the thought of their emptiness, as a witness to my work.

Behaving like an animal

Joanna Motion

JOHN LEVERT
The Flight of the Cassowary
298pp, Collins, £7.95.
0401842919

The cassowary who gets to fly in John LeVert's first novel is, on the face of it, an ordinary sort of creature: a sixteen-year-old, American-football-playing, New England schoolboy. Paul's daily activities swing in the customary way between home and high school: in the family, he warms to his younger brother, is irritated by his sister and is locked into sarcastic bickering with his father ("Tutting was my father's way of being in a good mood, just as it was his way of being in a rotten one"). School is a matter of close friendship with trouble-prone Jerry, the equivocal pleasures of football practice, the alarming approach to a first date and, of course, teachers and classes: English (Kafka's *Metamorphosis*), French (a hilarious translation - "students from all the parts of France, along with numerous strangers, continue to grab the art at the School of the Bozoz"), and most of all Biology.

For Paul is increasingly preoccupied with animal life and with the links between human and animal behaviour - with the zoo within. His studies of science, his observations of the human world and his insights into fauna ranging from the efficient spider at his window to the hectoring dog down the street, fuel his journey through a personal evolution: from seeing other people as animals he moves to recognizing individual creatures in himself, until he reaches the state of actually becoming an animal for short periods - on different occa-

sions a rhinoceros, a horse, a dog, a cat, a squirrel and, ultimately, a cassowary defying its own nature and taking flight.

The temptation to sentimentality, or at least to rampant anthropomorphism, in relating such a progress must be powerful, but LeVert presents with admirable matter-of-factness Paul's development into a sort of Mowgli in reverse, where the boy feels himself to be an animal making a good fist of passing himself off among the human tribe. In achieving this feat he conveys a genuine and illuminating fascination for the science of the animal life. There is also a good deal of humour. *The Flight of the Cassowary* is a wonderfully funny book and LeVert charts scene after scene from the teenage landscape - classroom and corridor life, family Thanksgiving Dinner, a disagreement with the girlfriend that is less a row than a sudden falling into misfit - with an engagingly unillusioned wit.

Even so, after saying grace and piling our plates full, we all stopped worrying about the turkey and ate it. At the end, we sat there with the remains of the turkey in the middle of the table like a family of lions lying around the carcass of an antelope they've just devoured. We were all sleepy and stuffed.

The book's extended animal metaphors are a resourceful way of exploring not only the tensions between people who are different (Paul and the football heavies, Paul and his father, the black kids and the white), but also the mutating identity of children growing up. *The Flight of the Cassowary* is an impressive first book. It ought to find a devoted and gleeful audience among both adolescent and older readers for its intelligence, its straight-talking and the laughter of recognition it constantly provokes.



One of Charles Keeping's dramatic, often sinister illustrations to Beowulf, in a prose version by Kevin Crossley-Holland which, while retaining some epic forms, aims for accessibility ("I did you great wrong in Heorot", Unferth said, "Too much beer, 'What's past is past', Beowulf said"). The book has recently been reissued in paperback by Oxford University Press (46pp, £2.50, 0 19 272184 4).

Outside experiences

Ann Ashford

CYNTHIA VOIGHT
Izzy, Willy-Nilly
252pp, Collins, £5.95
0401844237
ANNE BAILEY
Scars
145pp, Faber, £6.95,
0 571 148669
JEAN URE
One Green Leaf
176pp, Bodley Head, Paperback, £4.50,
0 370 30784 4

Teenagers, who tend to be rather scornful of the trifling and mundane concerns of their elders, will be absorbed by the fearful issues with which these three books are concerned. Not that any of them glory in violence or disaster; they each attempt to show how young people, suffering fate's most cruel blows, come to accept and learn from the experience. Serious issues are tackled without sentimentality, but with sympathy and understanding; teenagers will not feel they are being patronized. These books are worthy of the growing body of high quality fiction which sees the world and in particular human relationships from a teenager's viewpoint.

Cynthia Voight's latest book, *Izzy, Willy-Nilly*, is probably not her best work. Although many British readers will find it absorbing and thought-provoking, they may find it less easy to empathize with the heroine, Izzy, than with Dacey in *The Homecoming*, Dacey's *Song* and *Solitary Blue*. Perhaps they will have more difficulty in understanding the American context of this book: for example the immense prestige involved in being a cheer-leader for the school's basketball team may escape them. However, they will understand the traumatic effect of having a leg amputated on a pretty and popular young girl, who is the envy of her classmates. She had been on a date with a senior who drank too much and crashed his car when driving her home. A neat device is the way in which Izzy visualizes herself: she has an image of a little Izzy in her head, which reflects her mood, sometimes falling flat on its face, sometimes turning back-flips. As her old friends desert her, she finds sympathy and support not only from her family, but also from a new friend, Rosamunde, whom she had scarcely noticed as being worthy of her attention before the accident. At first she is terrified of going out into the world, where she can be seen as a cripple, but slowly she learns to cope. Readers may have a suspicion that they are being given a lesson in ethics (in common with many American children's books the moralizing is a little self-conscious) but they will certainly become involved with the characters. After a rather slow start Cynthia Voight's instinctive ability to portray complex relationships with sympathy and humour is once again revealed.

Scars is the first published novel of nineteen-year-old Anne Bailey. It is the product of a

real teenager, not an adult writing for teenagers, and has a remarkable intensity. The world is seen through the eyes of a traumatized sixteen-year-old, Tanya, who can no longer talk. She describes her thoughts and feelings in agonizing detail. The reader suspects early on that she has been the victim of incest committed by her alcoholic father, but the reason for her continuing inability to speak in spite of the efforts of her mother, wise new step-father and the doctors remains a mystery. What further trauma or guilt secret can be the cause of it? Very slowly the full horror of her tortured mind is revealed and the scars are found to be physical as well as mental. One can question some details in the plot: why is it, for example, that all the people she encounters after her father are paragons of virtue, always kind, patient, sensitive and helpful? Was it really necessary to delay treatment of her physical scars until she had faced and admitted the real reason for her feelings of guilt, imaginary though they were? *Scars* is a disturbing book and perhaps, as it deals with incest and depression, should not be on the shelves of a Junior School library. There is no denying, however, that it makes compulsive reading: the descriptions of the thoughts and feelings of a tortured mind are remarkable and memorable. The message is ultimately positive and optimistic.

One Green Leaf by Jean Ure is, like the other two books, written in the first person, but the storyteller, Robyn, is the observer of tragedy rather than the victim. David and Abbey, Zoot and Robyn are four close friends at Clareville Comprehensive. They come from normal homes and have normal teenage preoccupations. Abbey is deeply concerned about the Bomb, nuclear waste and radiation, and she press-gangs the others to attend meetings. In their sixth year Abbey and David become very close, although Robyn and Zoot are just good friends. Their relationships are simply but very effectively described and their often amusing conversations have the ring of truth. Even the minor characters, such as Robyn's father, are illuminatingly portrayed in a few short, effective pieces of dialogue. Jean Ure has a very light, deft touch. The first sign that something is wrong is when David comes into school limping. At first they think nothing of it, but slowly the gravity of the disease becomes apparent and their normal teenage self-absorption is rudely shattered. Each in his own way tries to help, but their well-intentioned efforts do not always have the results they expect. Much is left unsaid, but it may be none the worse for that. The reader will want to know about and discuss the problems raised. David was only seventeen and had every reason to fight for life. Were his parents right to refuse further treatment for him?

Jean Ure has a deservedly high reputation and this book is one of her best and most moving. It is easy to become involved in the story and like *Izzy, Willy-Nilly* and *Scars*, the book will challenge the reader to think about problems outside his (or more likely her) experience.

Speaking likenesses

John A. C. Greppin

MERRIT RUHLIN
A Guide to the World's Languages
Volume One: Classification
OUP, Arnold, £40.
0193 450020

Merrit Ruhlén's compelling book, *A Guide to the World's Languages*, will have deep appeal to all those, amateurs and specialists alike, who have an interest in the taxonomic arrangement of the world's 5,000 languages. Altogether, Ruhlén breaks them down into twenty enormous groups, to which he adds five language isolates, single languages which, though well understood, can be related to no other tongue

Behind the lines

continued from page 1016

all, and why should it not, when business can claim a significant proportion of their investment against tax as promotional expenditure, and when the event sponsored makes a larger splash than they have paid for, thanks to the government's contribution? The result is that the central funds are already running low, so that a ceiling of £5,000 has had to be imposed for the rest of the tax year. What arts organizations fear is that unless Mr Luce is successful in raising more cash for next year out of the Treasury, he will be eyeing the Council's own budget, and expecting them to use it to attract business funds.

In theory, there is another way out. The Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts (ABSA), which administers the present Incentive Scheme, points, a trifle tiredly, to the American example: businesses there do not have to argue with the tax man about whether money given is properly promotional or (taxable) "goodwill"; and private individuals can deduct donations to the arts from their personal tax bill. Here the only version of that is the "Payroll giving scheme", whereby a PAYE employee can give pre-tax up to £120 per year. It is, according to Tim Stockill of ABSA, a scheme so complex that only the largest companies can afford it ("and BP had to take on extra staff for administration"). However, asking the government to "voluntarize" taxation is agreed on all sides to be utopian, so that the pressure on arts organizations to go to market is unlikely to diminish: ABSA itself provides a measure. Three years ago (after seven rather shaky years of life) it had 100 business members; now it has 220, plus a staff of ten in London, two in Edinburgh, and one in Northern Ireland, all busy running a kind of marriage bureau that matches up sponsors and clients. It is the same kind of "professionalizing" development that is splitting the Arts Council's function.

As Tim Stockill explained, many people in the arts lack a marketing vocation - unsurprisingly, since they're paid peanuts, "and if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys". Better to pay professionals, and save the peanuts for the practitioners - "creating one job in Merseyside in industry costs over £8,000, whereas one job in the arts in the same place, it's estimated by the Policy Studies Institute, costs £54".

This last point touches on another kind of argument which the Council hopes will move local and central government: that the arts should be seen as part of a strategy for coping with crises of unemployment and educational under-provision in the inner cities. This is the other ("ethnic", "minority") side of the coin of business sponsorship, and between them they create a case for the arts as a kind of desirable social glue. They also (and this is where the Drama Enquiry's strategy comes back in) tend towards assimilating the arts to the service industries - in several senses. For example: the list of Business Incentive Scheme Awards to date published by the Office of Arts and Libraries shows new sponsors coming from the ranks of insurance companies, public relations people, estate agents, the legal profession and financial services. An Oxford subscription concert by Imogen Cooper in the Sheldonian Theatre, sponsored by Historical Collections, a company which trades under the name of "Past Time" and supplies "replicas of historical items by mail order", will stand conveniently as one of the implications of this sponsorship

(Basque is the best-known example). The most common of these twenty groups is Indo-European, which Ruhlén calls, sensibly but non-traditionally, Indo-Hittite; then come Uralic-Yukaghir, Altaic, Caucasian, Afro-Asiatic (which includes Hamito-Semitic), Eskimo-Aleut, Dravidian and Sino-Tibetan, all familiar names. Ruhlén claims that the languages constituting these groups are related to each other, having lexical and morphological parallels which can largely be demonstrated at a genetic level.

He then lists the lesser-known families: Khoisan, which includes the languages of southern Africa; Indo-Pacific, the languages of New Guinea and Tasmania; Chukchi-Kamchatkan, the smallest family, composed of five languages spoken near the Pacific coast of

the north-eastern Soviet Union; and others. It is a remarkable testimony to the diligence of linguists (and considering the primitive location in which many of these studies took place, to their digestion) that of these 5,000 languages we have been able to pigeon-hole all but sixteen, for that is all that remain unclassified.

In most of these twenty major groups, there are violently raging controversies as to which languages constitute part of a family. The Altaic family, which traditionally contains Turkic, Mongol and Tungus (Tungus includes Manchu, the language of the rulers of China from 1644 to 1911, which is now nearly extinct), has had, principally through the daring efforts of Roy Andrew Miller, Japanese joined to it; others have added Korean and Ainu (also nearly extinct). In another group, the position of Thai is much argued over. Some hold the traditional view that it is closest to Sino-Tibetan; others, led in part by the linguist-cum-psychiatrist Paul Benedict, remove it from that family and place it in a hotly debated group called Austic, which includes among its 1,100 members the Munda languages of India, Vietnamese and Cambodian, and the multitudinous languages of Malaya and Polynesia. This enormous group cannot be considered a family in the traditional sense; rather it is a phylum of four families, all members having certain shared structural features.

The grouping of the languages of the Americas is also a matter where opinions vary. Ruhlén, following his mentor Joseph Greenberg, a spokesman for language universalists, sees only three groups: Eskimo-Aleut, Na-Dene and Amerindian. There is little debate about what the Eskimo-Aleut group includes, and the same goes for Na-Dene, a phylum of four somewhat similar families spoken in southern Alaska and western Canada, including as well Apache and Navajo. The remaining indigenous American languages, all the way

down to Tierra del Fuego, are part of the Amerindian family, and here we face a clearly defined problem, caused by the passing of the millennia. As a rule of thumb, historical linguists say that a span of 10,000 years is sufficient to obliterate most of the visible relationships between cognate languages. If we were to compare, for instance, contemporary French with contemporary Russian, without looking at their earlier levels, we would be hard pressed to prove that they are related. For this reason we will continue to have trouble with the taxonomy of the Amerindian languages, for the oldest of them separated from their Asian sister languages more than 15,000 years ago.

The author of this remarkable work will have to hear some criticism, for no man can really control the taxonomy of 5,000 languages, and Ruhlén is mortal. He errs not only in judgment, but sometimes in fact, saying for instance that Hurrian, an ancient language of south-east Anatolia, is, like Basque, a language isolate. Yet we now know that the Urartians, who left a cuneiform literature, had a language quite similar to Hurrian. And there are further relations that Ruhlén has overlooked. He does not seem to know about the proposal by Igor Diakonoff which in the last decade has joined ancient Hurrian and Urartian to the multitudinous living languages of the north-east Caucasus, such as Chechen, Lezghian and Avvar. And here there is a systematic gap in the book since Ruhlén seems unaware, in many areas, of contemporary Soviet scholarship, which has advanced linguistic taxonomy.

Every specialist will find something to disagree with in the book but Ruhlén has been so cautious and so open about his reasons for the views he takes that little can be called absolutely wrong. In fact he has done a superb job, warts and all.

THE TIMES SUPPLEMENTS

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Fiction in the Historical Present: French writers and the Thirties by Mary Jean Green (320pp, University Press of New England, £24, 0 87451 364 2) analyses the political dimension of ten 1930s French novelists: Aragon, Brasillach, Céline, Dabit, Drieu la Rochelle, Malraux, Martin du Gard, Sartre and Nizan. Though clearly and enthusiastically written, the book contains almost nothing new. In part this is inevitable because so much has already been written on the subject, but Green is too willing to conclude that the pre-1939 Sartre was unpolemical, which is what Sartre himself claimed. But it is too heretical to note that the vitriolic and simplistic satire of the middle class in "L'Enfer" comes close to the post-war "Le chef d'un chef" of the class struggle? And is it true that the NRF writers of the 1920s "flee" from historical reality? Surely the quest for tradition in Valéry Larbaud's later essays, for example, is an attempt to stitch together the fragments of a culture that had been torn apart by the First World War.

Patrick McCarthy

